"The Eternals' world has changed forever, and Gillen and Ribić are here to shake up everything they can." – Comic Watch
ETERNALS
GILLEN
RIBIĆ
VILANOVA
WILSON
HAIL THANOS
MARVEL

ETERNALS

HAIL THANOS

ETERNALS

HAIL THANOS

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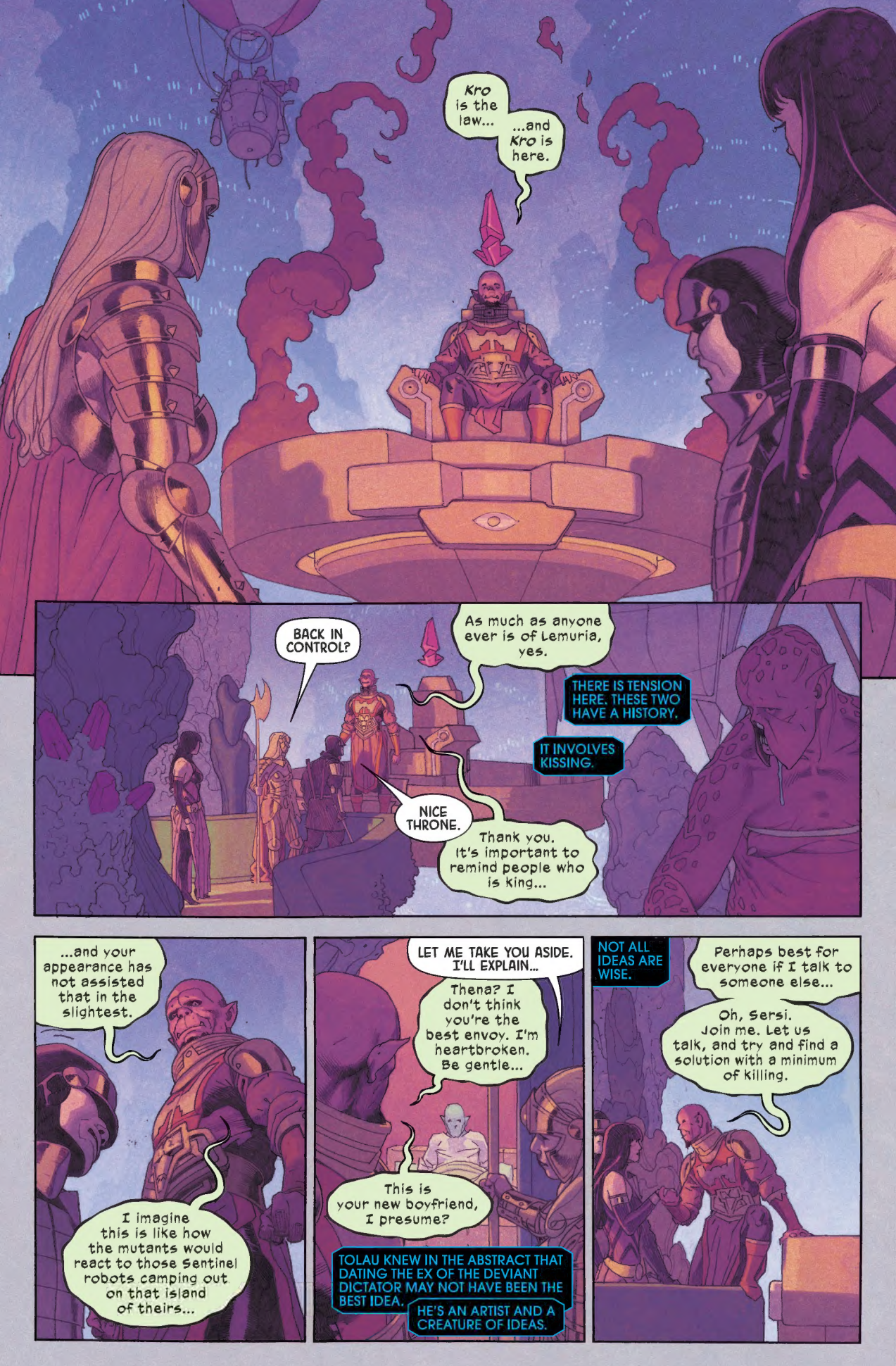
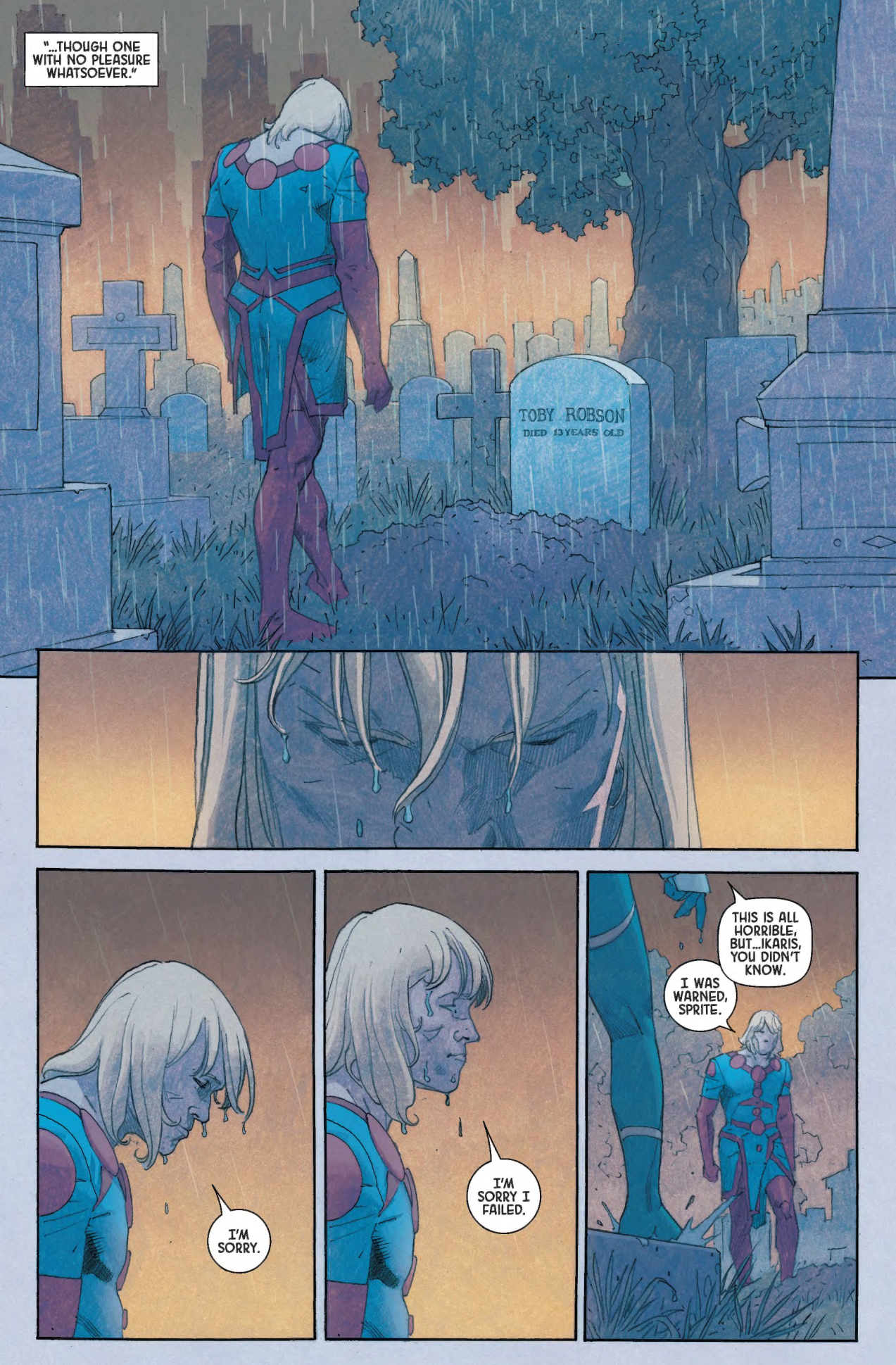
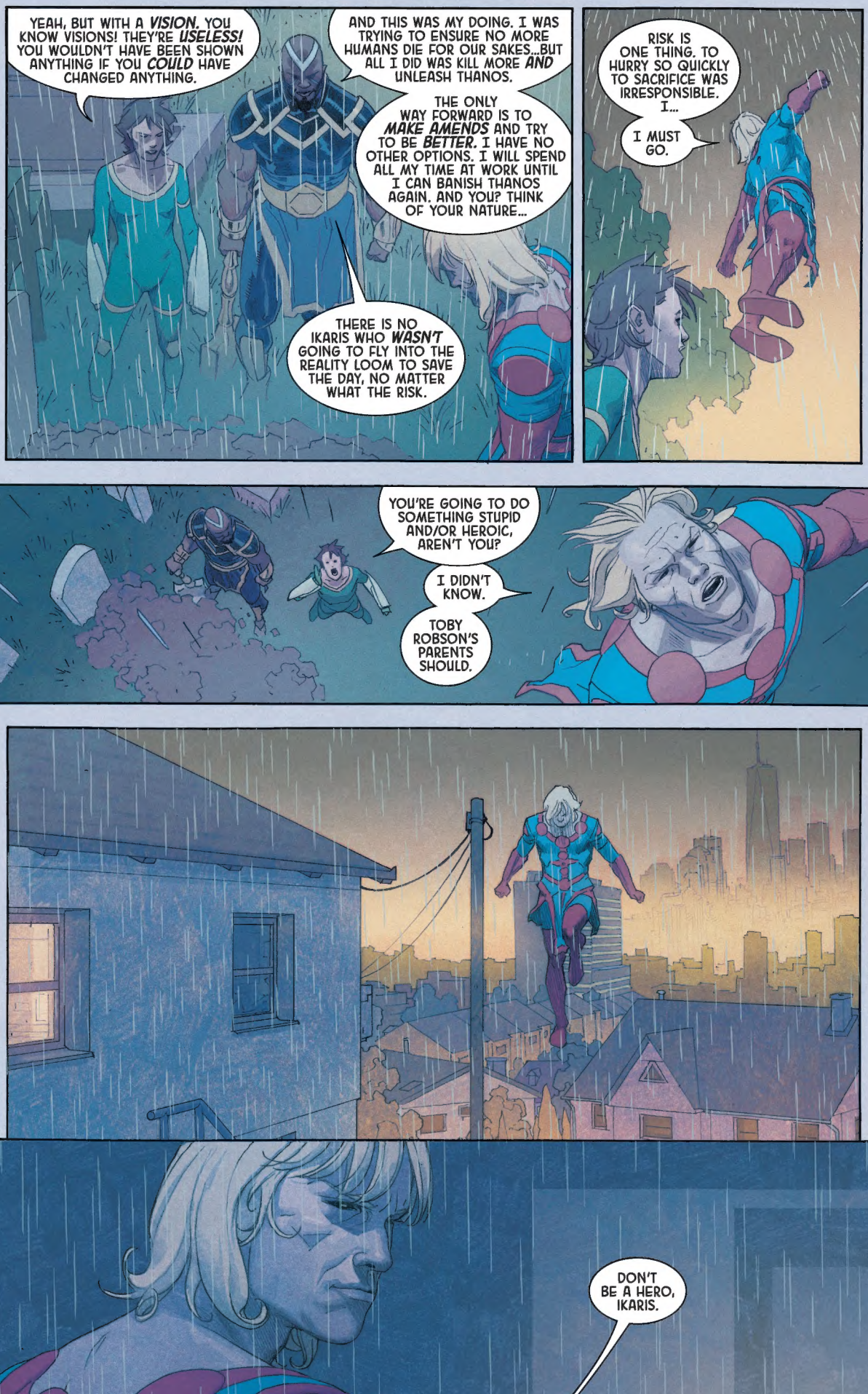
LEMURIA,
CITY OF THE DEVIANTS.
THE SHOUTING WAKES TOLAU THE DELIRIOUS FROM A NIGHTMARE.
HE IMAGINED HIMSELF TRAPPED, SHARING A ROOM WITH THE BEINGS WHO HAD MURDERED UNTOLD MILLIONS OF HIS PEOPLE.
HE HAS A MOMENT OF HORROR WHEN HE REMEMBERS, NO, THAT'S TRUE.
HIS ETERNAL GIRLFRIEND TURNED UP WITH HER FRIENDS. HE COULD HARDLY SAY NO, FOR MANY REASONS, NOT LEAST, FEAR.
BUT THE NOISE THAT AWOKE HIM?
IT SEEMS HIS PEERS ARE WELL AWARE OF HIS NEW HOUSEMATES.
Look! It's them! It's really them!

DEATH TO THE ETERNALS!
OH, WHAT A TIME FOR IKARIS TO GO HAVE A DRAMATIC MOPE. OKAY...YOU GO LEFT.
I'LL TAKE THE BIG--
NO! KINGO! THINK! WE'RE HERE TO CHANGE OUR WAYS.
KILLING DEVIANTS IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THAT.
YEAH, EASY TO SAY, THENA.
BUT "I COME IN PEACE" DOESN'T GO FAR WHEN THOSE YOU'RE COMING TO WANT TO CUT YOU INTO PIECES...
My people, my people... be calm!
Disperse! You need not take the law into your own hands.


Kro is the law...
...and Kro is here.
BACK IN CONTROL?
As much as anyone ever is of Lemuria, yes.
THERE IS TENSION HERE. THESE TWO HAVE A HISTORY.
IT INVOLVES KISSING.
NICE THRONE.
Thank you. It's important to remind people who is king...
...and your appearance has not assisted that in the slightest.
I imagine this is like how the mutants would react to those Sentinel robots camping out on that island of theirs...
LET ME TAKE YOU ASIDE. I'LL EXPLAIN...
Thena? I don't think you're the best envoy. I'm heartbroken. Be gentle...
This is your new boyfriend, I presume?
TOLAU KNEW IN THE ABSTRACT THAT DATING THE EX OF THE DEVIANT DICTATOR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN THE BEST IDEA.
HE'S AN ARTIST AND A CREATURE OF IDEAS.
NOT ALL IDEAS ARE WISE.
Perhaps best for everyone if I talk to someone else...
Oh, Sersi. Join me. Let us talk, and try and find a solution with a minimum of killing.

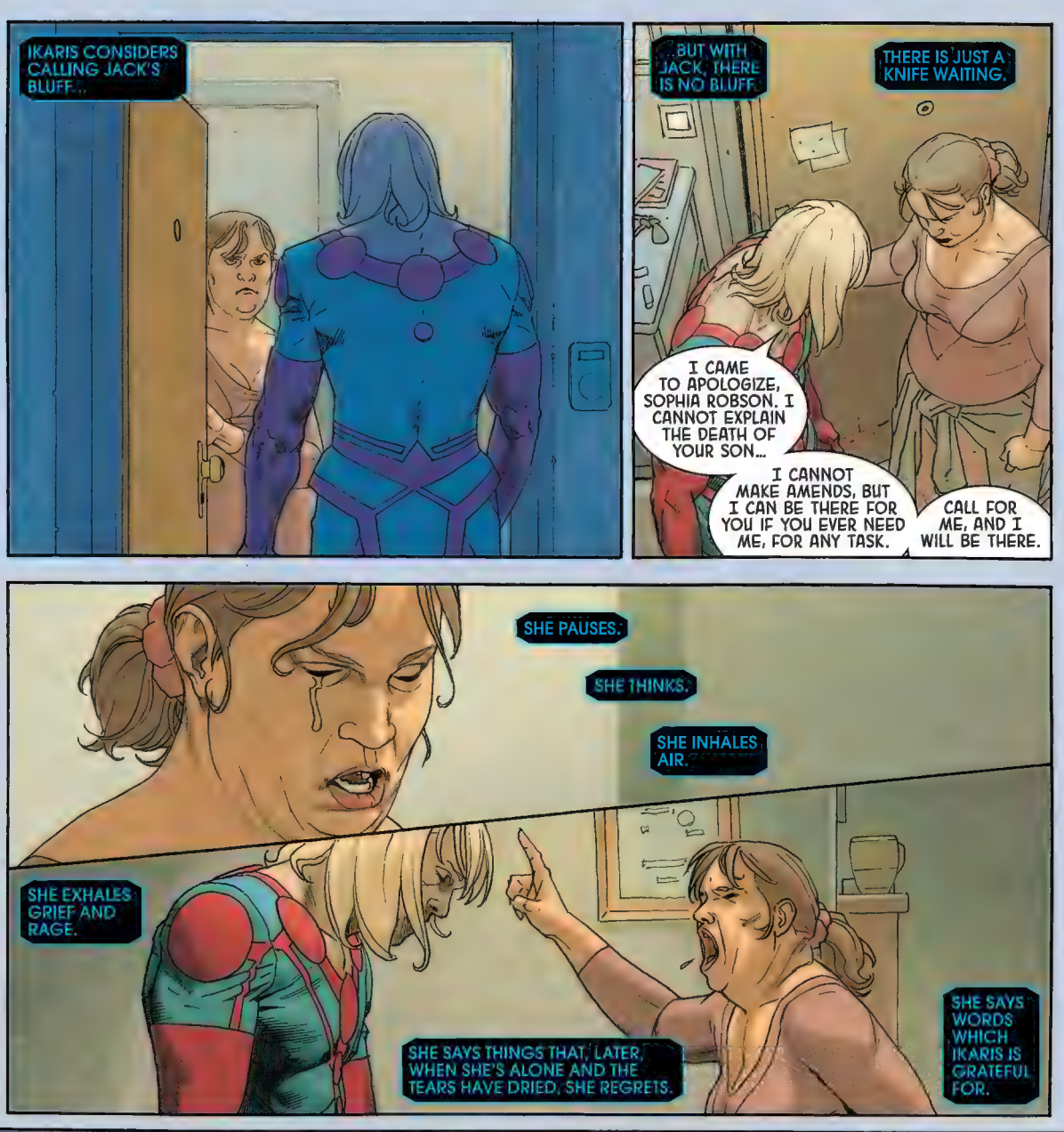
THE SHORT OF IT IS THAT WE WISH TO LEARN OF CHANGE.
WE KNOW IT'S A DELICATE POSITION. ONE OR TWO EXILES IS A DIFFERENT THING FROM A MOB... BUT WE WILL BE OF USE.
Hmmm. We'll say you're penitents and similar. Your arrival as beggars at the gates will help sell that...
We'll need to perform a symbolic humbling. Bowing, kneeling, scraping. That sort of thing...
I'm sorry. I wish there could be more dignity.
Politics is an ugly business, especially in Lemuria.
I UNDERSTAND. I LOOK FORWARD TO LEARNING MORE ABOUT HOW THE UGLINESS OF YOUR POLITICS DIFFERS FROM THE UGLINESS OF OURS.
There is one more condition...
When this is all done, join me for dinner.
I DON'T THINK THAT'S A GOOD IDEA.
I'm so glad we agree. It's a *terrible* idea.
Let's do it.
VERY WELL.
A THREE-COURSE MEAL OF BUSINESS, PLEASURE AND TERRIBLE IDEAS.
I was told there were six new Eternals here. I counted three. What other honored guests do we have?
IKARIS, PHASTOS AND SPRITE...
THEY HAVE THEIR OWN BUSINESS...


"...THOUGH ONE WITH NO PLEASURE WHATSOEVER."
TOBY ROBSON
DIED 13 YEARS OLD
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY I FAILED.
THIS IS ALL HORRIBLE, BUT...IKARIS, YOU DIDN'T KNOW.
I WAS WARNED, SPRITE.


YEAH, BUT WITH A VISION. YOU KNOW VISIONS! THEY'RE USELESS! YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SHOWN ANYTHING IF YOU COULD HAVE CHANGED ANYTHING.
AND THIS WAS MY DOING. I WAS TRYING TO ENSURE NO MORE HUMANS DIE FOR OUR SAKES...BUT ALL I DID WAS KILL MORE AND UNLEASH THANOS.
THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS TO MAKE AMENDS AND TRY TO BE BETTER. I HAVE NO OTHER OPTIONS. I WILL SPEND ALL MY TIME AT WORK UNTIL I CAN BANISH THANOS AGAIN. AND YOU? THINK OF YOUR NATURE...
THERE IS NO IKARIS WHO WASN'T GOING TO FLY INTO THE REALITY LOOM TO SAVE THE DAY, NO MATTER WHAT THE RISK.
RISK IS ONE THING. TO HURRY SO QUICKLY TO SACRIFICE WAS IRRESPONSIBLE. I...
I MUST GO.
YOU'RE GOING TO DO SOMETHING STUPID AND/OR HEROIC, AREN'T YOU?
I DIDN'T KNOW.
TOBY ROBSON'S PARENTS SHOULD.
DON'T BE A HERO, IKARIS.

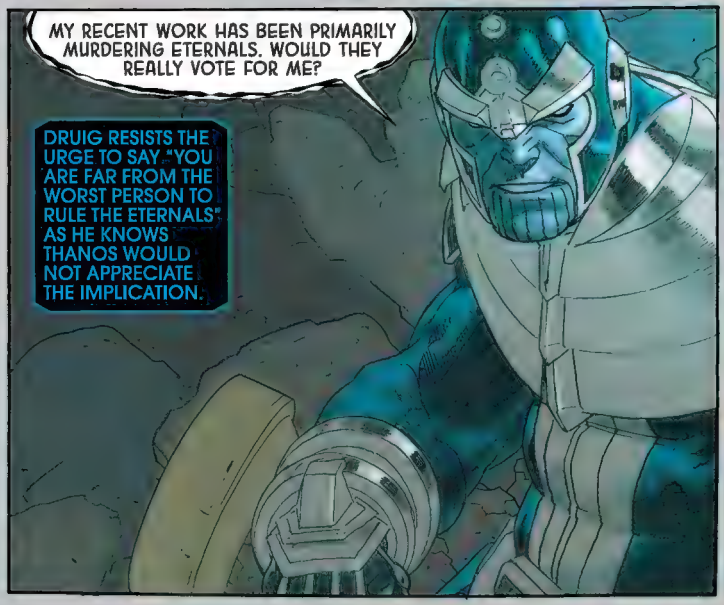
YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNED BY NOW...
...BEING A HERO JUST GETS PEOPLE KILLED.
JACK OF KNIVES IS OF THE TRICKS, ONE FOURTH OF THE ETERNAL CRIME LORDS.
JACK OF KNIVES IS CONSIDERATE IN ONE WAY, AND ONE WAY ALONE.
THEIR CHOICE OF NAME.
IT'S LIKE IF IKARIS CALLED HIMSELF "IKARIS THE ARROW."
I AM NOT IN THE MOOD FOR MOCKERY FROM THE TRICKS. YOU HAVE NO INTEREST IN THIS MATTER. I AM HERE TO TELL THEM THE TRUTH ABOUT THEIR BOY...
AND I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU DO THAT, AND THEY DIE TOO.
WHAT?
ANYONE ELSE YOU TELL DIES. SAY IT ON TELEVISION, AND I'LL BE THERE ATTACHING MEMETIC POISONS TO YOUR WORDS TO DRILL HOLES THROUGH EACH HUMAN'S MIND.
YOU CAN'T JUST BE SPILLING THE SECRET TO ANYONE. IT CAUSES FAR TOO MANY PROBLEMS...

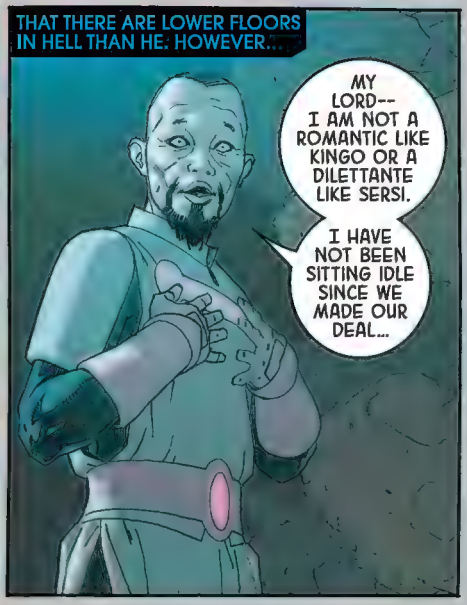
YOU MOCK ME FOR DELUSIONS OF HEROISM AND THEN SAY SUCH THINGS TO MY FACE?
DO YOU BELIEVE *YOURSELF* HERO ENOUGH TO THINK YOU CAN STOP ME FROM TEARING YOUR HEAD FROM YOUR BODY?
FIRSTLY, YOU'D HAVE TO CATCH ME. YOU'RE FAST, SURE, BUT *FINDING* ME IS HARDER.
SECONDLY, KILL ME?
HAVE YOU *ALREADY* FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU LEARNED?
YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THESE MATTERS.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE MAKING SUCH A FUSS OVER THE WHOLE "HUMAN DEATH" THING. THEY'LL REPLACE THEMSELVES SOON ENOUGH.
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO THERE WASN'T EVEN A BILLION OF THEM, AND LOOK AT THEM NOW.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. I DON'T CARE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
YOU KNOW HOW IT GOES. SOMEONE PAYS ME ENOUGH, AND I CAN FIND A WAY TO CARE...
BE SEEING YOU.
WHAT THE &$#% ARE YOU DOING OUT THERE?


IKARIS CONSIDERS CALLING JACK'S BLUFF...
...BUT WITH JACK, THERE IS NO BLUFF.
THERE IS JUST A KNIFE WAITING.
I CAME TO APOLOGIZE, SOPHIA ROBSON. I CANNOT EXPLAIN THE DEATH OF YOUR SON...
I CANNOT MAKE AMENDS, BUT I CAN BE THERE FOR YOU IF YOU EVER NEED ME, FOR ANY TASK.
CALL FOR ME, AND I WILL BE THERE.
SHE PAUSES.
SHE THINKS.
SHE INHALES AIR.
SHE EXHALES GRIEF AND RAGE.
SHE SAYS THINGS THAT, LATER, WHEN SHE'S ALONE AND THE TEARS HAVE DRIED, SHE REGRETS.
SHE SAYS WORDS WHICH IKARIS IS GRATEFUL FOR.
THE IDEA THAT HE COULD BE FORGIVEN IS, SOMEHOW, THE WORST THING.
DEATH IS ETERNAL. HIS SHAME FOR TOBY SHOULD BE LIKEWISE.

DEEP IN THE SUBSPACE TUNNELS OF THE MACHINE.
SO...I AM FREE OF THE SMITH, YET STILL NOT WHOLE.
WHAT NOW, DRUIG?
A GOOD QUESTION, AND WITH A LONG AND A SHORT ANSWER. THE LONG ANSWER...
PHASTOS NO LONGER KNOWS HOW TO ACTIVATE THE FAIL-SAFES HE PLACED IN YOUR FORM...BUT YOU ARE STILL THE FRANKENSTEIN HE MADE YOU.
YOU WANT A NEW BODY? YOU NEED TO REJOIN THE GREAT MACHINE FULLY.
YES. CAN YOU NOT DO THAT?
A NEW BODY WOULD SOLVE MANY PROBLEMS--NOT LEAST THE CHANCE PHASTOS WILL REMEMBER THE FAIL-SAFE. HE IS AN INTELLIGENT FOOL AND DRIVEN BY GUILT. HE WILL BE TRYING TO FIND A WAY...
PLEASE, LORD THANOS. I'M NOT A BUNGLER.
IF I DELETE A MEMORY, A MEMORY STAYS DELETED.
HOWEVER, IN TERMS OF INTEGRATING YOU? I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO APPROACH THE MATTER.
IS IT A SCIENTIFIC TASK? OR IS IT SOMETHING ANYONE WITH SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY COULD JUST ORDER? OR IS IT A MATTER FOR THE PRIESTS? I DON'T KNOW.
MY SOLUTION: IF YOU WERE PRIME ETERNAL, YOU WOULD HAVE BOTH THE AUTHORITY TO ORDER IT DONE IF IT'S SIMPLE, OR FORCE OTHERS TO DO IT IF IT'S NOT...
HAH. YOU BELIEVE THE SHAME OF TITAN COULD BE SELECTED AS PRIME ETERNAL?

THE ETERNALS ARE ABOUT TO FORM THE UNI-MIND TO SELECT ONE. THEY THINK IT A MATTER OF SIMPLE PROTOCOL...
ZURAS IS NOT EXPECTING A SERIOUS CHALLENGER, AND SO LEAVES HIMSELF VULNERABLE...


MY RECENT WORK HAS BEEN PRIMARILY MURDERING ETERNALS. WOULD THEY REALLY VOTE FOR ME?
DRUIG RESISTS THE URGE TO SAY "YOU ARE FAR FROM THE WORST PERSON TO RULE THE ETERNALS" AS HE KNOWS THANOS WOULD NOT APPRECIATE THE IMPLICATION.


THAT THERE ARE LOWER FLOORS IN HELL THAN HE. HOWEVER...
MY LORD-- I AM NOT A ROMANTIC LIKE KINGO OR A DILETTANTE LIKE SERSI.
I HAVE NOT BEEN SITTING IDLE SINCE WE MADE OUR DEAL...

I HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, YET IT'S NEVER ENOUGH... BUT I MADE CERTAIN MOVES.
NOW, IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY AT DIAGRAM A, I'LL DEMONSTRATE HOW...
OLYMPIA
POLARIA
THE OCEANIC WATCH
CELESTIA
THE EXCLUSION
THE HEX
LOCATION UNKNOWN
DAMOCLES FOUNDATION
THANOS

DRUIG'S ELECTION MANIPULATION PROPOSAL (V3.71)

Zuras has called an election of the Prime Eternal to deal with certain problems.

1) He wishes to force those who have learned of the truth of resurrection to be mindwiped. This will be possible if they join the Uni-Mind. It's happened many times before.

2) If not, he wishes to re-establish his authority to act against them.
He has done this with haste. This means that many of those murdered will not be able to vote.

This gives us an opportunity...

OLYMPIA

Zuras' natural demographic and will, broadly speaking, support him. However, as Ikaris, Sersi, etc. are in hiding, their numbers will be reduced...and I have certain leverage on certain members. I believe I can have them abstain. Due to the nature of their unfortunate state, Delphan Brothers do not vote.

Votes: 18 for Zuras, maximum. In practice 14-17.

POLARIA

Would naturally support Zuras in keeping the secret. However, its leaders and many of the citizenry are not alive. Those remaining will mostly follow their present Supreme Leader, myself.

Votes: 6 for Thanos.

THE OCEANIC *WATCH*

Oceanus has not involved himself in politics for nearly a million years, commanding the Uranite Eternals as a defense against Lemurian aggression. He won't vote...but the Uranites have been estranged forever. They followed a man of brutal vision before. They will do so again.

Votes: 6 for Thanos.

CELESTIA

The Priests have their own concerns. I understand Makkari and Ajak are working on significant projects and would loathe to be distracted. I have passed word to them that this is just a formality. I expect they will be absent.

Votes: Likely, none.

THE EXCLUSION

The Excluded, as the name implies, do not join the Uni-Mind. The Jailers are still dead.

Votes: None.

TITANOS HERMITS

I made some attempts to convince them. Blind Orla laughed at thin air and then grew silent. The Bride of Heaven would only talk through the medium of long, technical astro-poetry. It may have been a yes. Scab threw his own feces at me until I left.

Votes: Perhaps 1.

THE GAIAN SISTERS

Had enough of Zuras, one way another.

Votes: 0.

THE TRICKS

Can be bought, and have been.

Votes: 4 for Thanos.

THE FORGOTTEN

Gilgamesh and his followers do not join the Uni-Mind, out of rejection of Eternal society...and also the knowledge that they would be mindwiped if they did.

Votes: 0.

THE HEX

Of course, unavailable.

Votes: 0.

LOCATION UNKNOWN

If any of their number turned up to vote on what appears to be simple procedural vote, it would be surprising enough to be worth the upset.

Votes: 0.

DAMOCLES FOUNDATION

I have met and talked about the boring nature of the meeting, and how exciting and essential their work with human corporate structures are. Like the Priests, I think they believe their own projects more important.

Votes: Hopefully, 0.

THANOS

I trust we can count on you, my Lord.

Votes: 1.

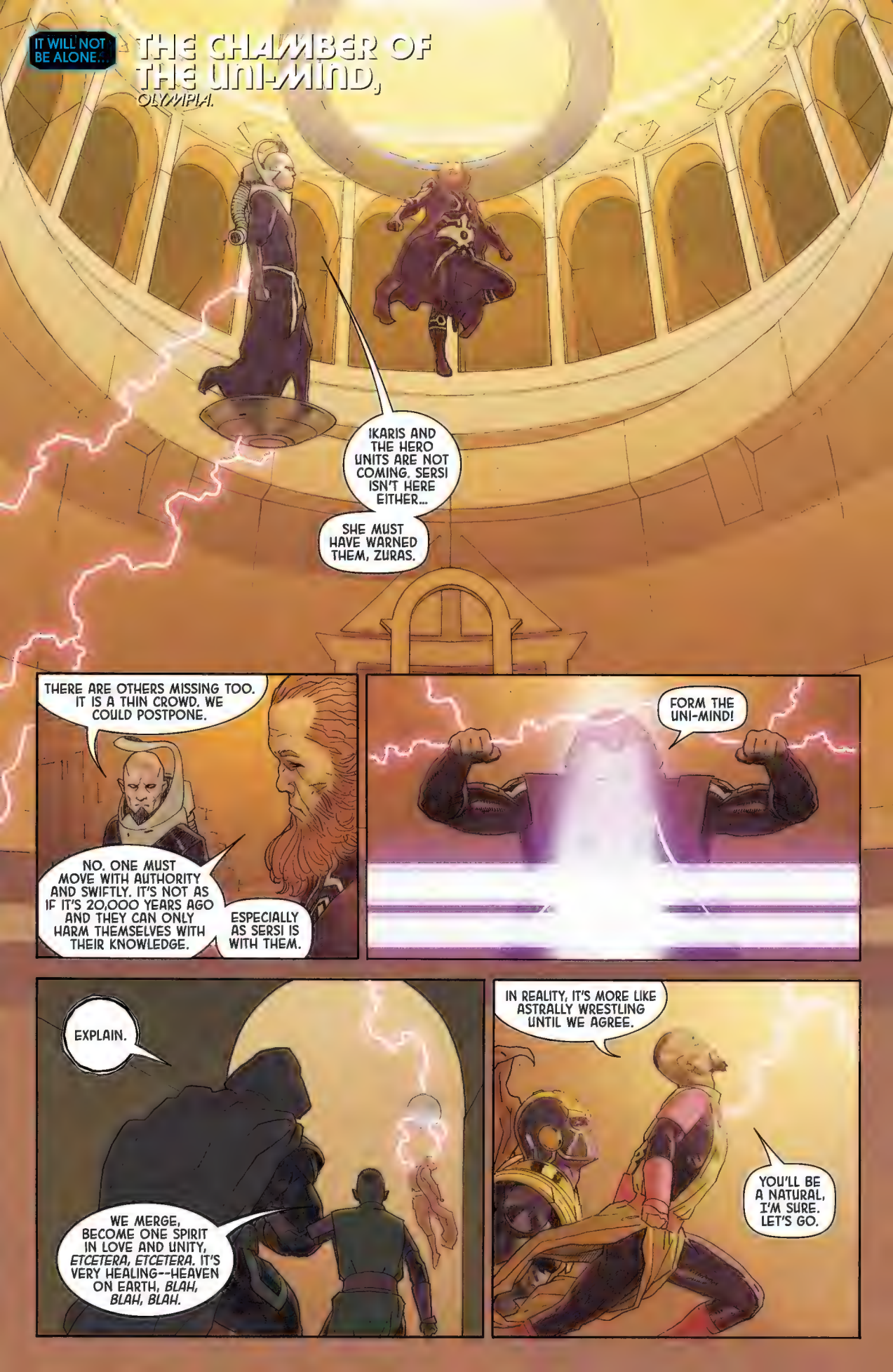
ZURAS TOTAL: 14-18.

THANOS TOTAL: 17-18.

THE OCEANIC WATCH
CELESTIA
THE EXCLUSION
LOCATION UNKNOWN
DAMOCLES FOUNDATION
THANOS
IN SHORT-- SOME WHO WOULD NEVER NORMALLY VOTE WILL VOTE. SOME WHO ALWAYS VOTE WILL NOT BE THERE.
YOU HAVE A STRONG CHANCE OF BEING PRIME ETERNAL.
AND SO, WE RETURN TO YOUR FIRST QUESTION... "WHAT NOW?"
WHEN YOU ARE ETERNAL PRIME?
WHATEVER THANOS DESIRES.
HMM. WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?
A MILLION YEARS AGO, I STOOD IN THE FOURTH ROW, BEHIND THE GREAT LEADERS AND THEIR SECONDS AND THEIR SECONDS.
AND ALL HATED ME.
AS THE YEARS DISAPPEARED THE "GREAT" DID TOO. AT EACH POINT, I STEP FORWARD A RANK.
STANDING AT THE SHOULDER OF THE GREATEST OF GREAT MEN?
THIS IS ALL THAT A SNAKE SUCH AS I COULD EVER HOPE FOR.
IN THE MANNER OF DRUIG, THIS IS TRUTH WITH ITS COILS CURLED PROTECTIVELY AROUND A LIE. SPECIFICALLY, A LIE OF OMISSION.
WHILE HE DID DELETE THANOS' SELF-DESTRUCT FROM PHASTOS, HE ALSO COPIED IT.
DRUIG CAN KILL THANOS ANYTIME HE WISHES.
DRUIG IS RIGHT WHEN HE SAYS HE WORKS VERY HARD.
BUT IN TRUTH, HE ONLY EVER WORKS HARD FOR HIMSELF.
VERY WELL. LET US PROGRESS. LET US TRY TO GIVE THE ETERNALS THE FIRST KING WORTHY OF THE NAME.
THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WORK JUST AS HARD. HOWEVER...

KRO UNDERSTANDS OUR PREDICAMENT. HE--
OH. HOW STRIKING...
...AN ARTIST'S MUSE BEARS AN UNRELENTING WHIP.
Thank you.
It's nearly done...
JUST LOOK AT THIS THING, SERSI! THE THENA IS A SECONDARY ADAMANTIUM ALLOY.
THE TOLAU IS MEAT.
DOESN'T THAT--><AHEM><-- LIMIT THE PIECE SOMEWHAT?
Art *can* be eternal, but it need not be.
My art is transitory, beautiful and awful, like life.

YOU SEEM...CALMER, TOLAU.
Well, I was until you said that. Art does that to me.
The art is the only thing which makes sense.
Art and love.
And there's now less than a day until I have to debut this.
You're all invited, and you'll see it in its completed state then.
I need to concentrate. Settle in. I'll be up when I'm finished...
Art and love. It's all that ever mattered.
I want as much as I can get...
...for however long I have left.
"DEVIANTS DEVIATE" IS ONE TRUTH. "ETERNALS CORRECT" IS ANOTHER.
THIS IS A TRAGEDY APPROACHING.


IT WILL NOT BE ALONE...
THE CHAMBER OF THE UNI-MIND, OLYMPIA.
IKARIS AND THE HERO UNITS ARE NOT COMING. SERSI ISN'T HERE EITHER...
SHE MUST HAVE WARNED THEM, ZURAS.
THERE ARE OTHERS MISSING TOO. IT IS A THIN CROWD. WE COULD POSTPONE.
NO. ONE MUST MOVE WITH AUTHORITY AND SWIFTLY. IT'S NOT AS IF IT'S 20,000 YEARS AGO AND THEY CAN ONLY HARM THEMSELVES WITH THEIR KNOWLEDGE.
ESPECIALLY AS SERSI IS WITH THEM.
FORM THE UNI-MIND!
EXPLAIN.
WE MERGE, BECOME ONE SPIRIT IN LOVE AND UNITY, *ETCETERA, ETCETERA.* IT'S VERY HEALING--HEAVEN ON EARTH, *BLAH, BLAH, BLAH.*
IN REALITY, IT'S MORE LIKE ASTRALLY WRESTLING UNTIL WE AGREE.
YOU'LL BE A NATURAL, I'M SURE. LET'S GO.

WE ARE THE ETERNALS!
ZURAS IS THE CANDIDATE. IN THE FLOOD OF CONSCIOUSNESSES, HE AWAITS THE APPROVAL...
THEN ALL REALIZE THERE IS ANOTHER CONTENDER. ONE PROMISING FREEDOM, CHANGE, GLORY.
ONE WHO REMINDS THEM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY THEIR GODS.
ONE WHO PROMISES TO BE THEIR NEW GOD.
ONE WHO WILL SET THEM FREE.

ZURAS REALIZES WHAT'S HAPPENING. SOME REJECT THANOS...BUT THE CHALLENGER STILL HAS THE EDGE.
HE WRENCHES HIMSELF FREE.
WE ARE NOW OF ONE MIND...
HAIL THANOS, PRIME ECERNAL!
THUD
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
ZZZZAP

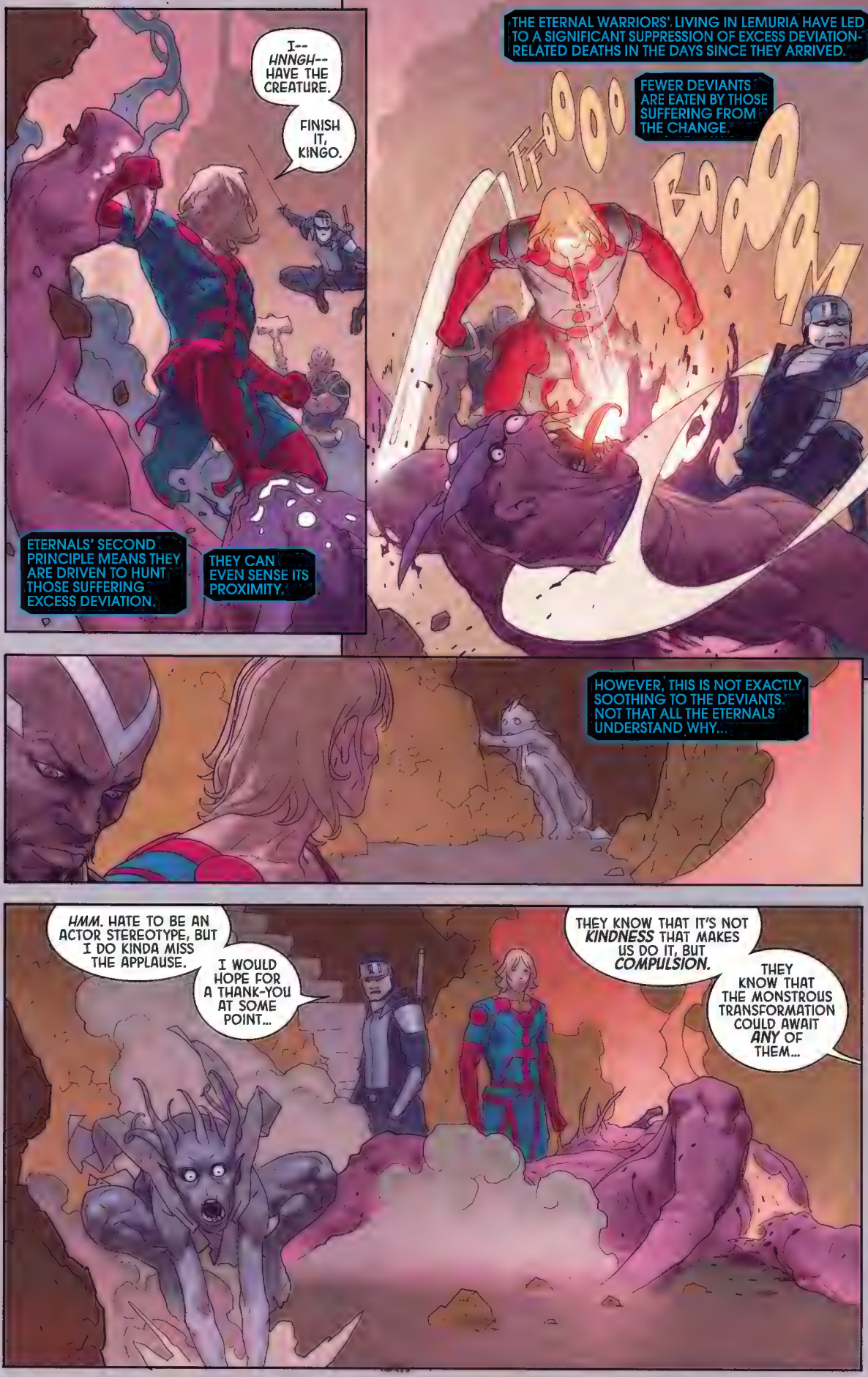
YOU'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN?
IT WAS ONLY LAST WEEK.
LET ME GIVE YOU A REMINDER.
BOOM
SMACK
I'M MURDERING YOU, DEAR UNCLE.

I SOMETIMES FORGET HOW MUCH POLITICS CAN REFRESH THE SPIRIT.
I AM PRIME ETERNAL, AND I WILL BE RESPECTED. IT IS A NEW AGE. I WILL SET YOU ALL FREE.
NO MATTER WHAT IT COSTS YOU.
THE CHANT GOES UP. THANOS: PRIME ETERNAL!
SOME ARE SINCERE. SOME ARE PETRIFIED. SOME PASS MESSAGES TO THEIR ABSENT FRIENDS. PANIC SPREADS. BLAME SPREADS.
WELL DONE, MY LORD. MANY ARE STILL BEING RESURRECTED. I SUGGEST THEY'RE AT LEAST TEMPORARILY EXCLUDED WHILE THE NEW REALITY IS EXPLAINED TO THEM.
I SUSPECT MY FATHER WILL SHOW THE SAME RETICENCE AS ZURAS TO ACCEPT YOUR NEW ORDER.
WE CAN HANDLE THIS. AND THEN...TO QUOTE A WISE MAN AND NOW RULER OF THE ETERNALS...
"WHAT NOW?"

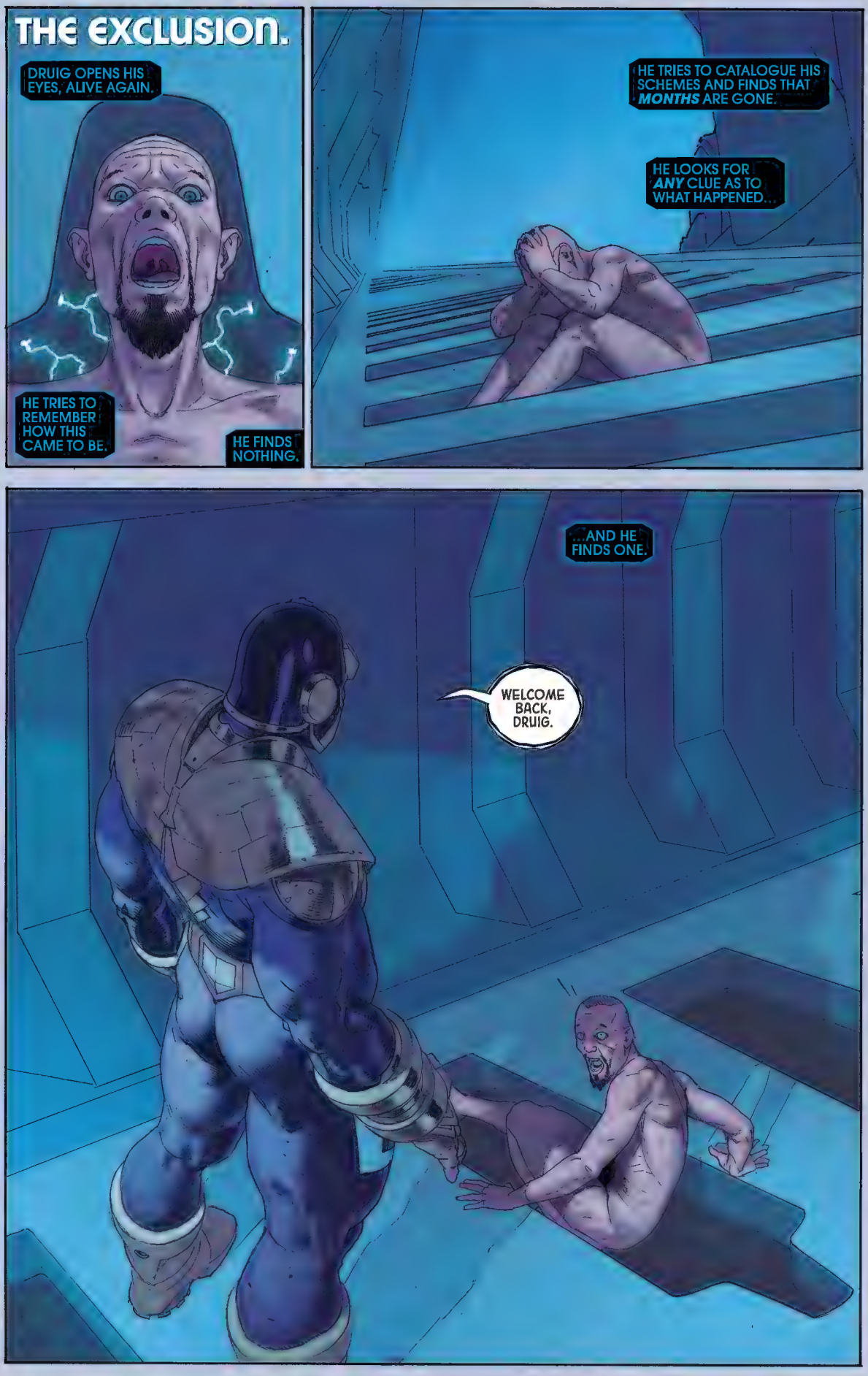
FIRST, THIS.
DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D NOT ASSUME YOU'D KEEP A COPY OF WHAT YOU DELETED FROM PHASTOS' MIND?
THE ARROGANCE OF YOU ETERNALS.
SPLATT
HMM... WHAT NEXT? TO QUOTE A FOOL I ONCE KNEW...
"WHATEVER THANOS DESIRES."

8

LEMURIA.
HELP!
FOR ALL THE CHAOS, THE AMOUNT OF CRIME IN LEMURIA FALLS WELL WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF MOST MODERN HUMAN METROPOLISES.
THE EXCEPTION IS MURDERS PERFORMED BY DEVIANTS WHO HAVE SUCCUMBED TO EXCESS DEVIATION.
LEMURIA IS THE WORLD CAPITAL OF DEVIANTS EATING OTHER DEVIANTS.
Not me! I'm sorry, but... please!
Not--
KRA
KRA
KRA

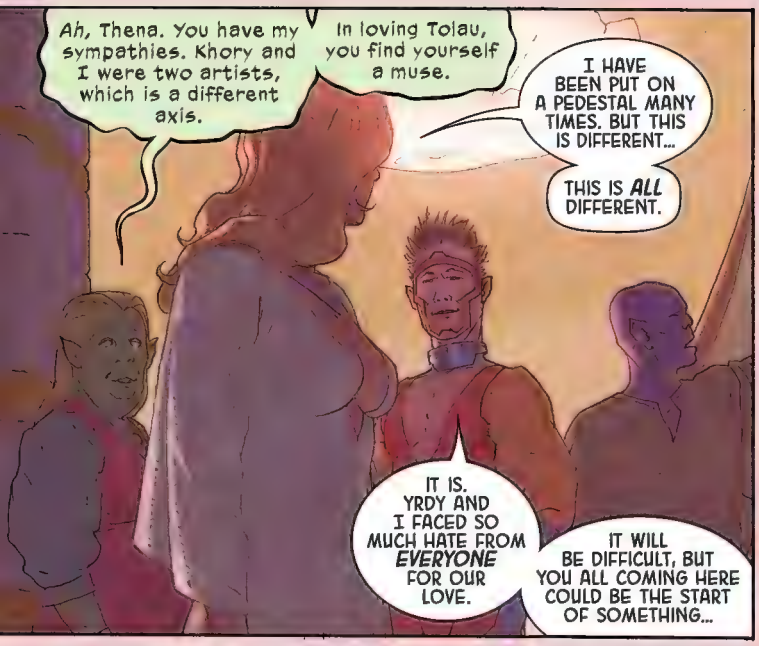

I-- HNNGH-- HAVE THE CREATURE.
FINISH IT, KINGO.
ETERNALS' SECOND PRINCIPLE MEANS THEY ARE DRIVEN TO HUNT THOSE SUFFERING EXCESS DEVIATION.
THEY CAN EVEN SENSE ITS PROXIMITY.
THE ETERNAL WARRIORS' LIVING IN LEMURIA HAVE LED TO A SIGNIFICANT SUPPRESSION OF EXCESS DEVIATION-RELATED DEATHS IN THE DAYS SINCE THEY ARRIVED.
FEWER DEVIANTS ARE EATEN BY THOSE SUFFERING FROM THE CHANGE.
KRAK
BOOOM
HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT EXACTLY SOOTHING TO THE DEVIANTS. NOT THAT ALL THE ETERNALS UNDERSTAND WHY...
HMM. HATE TO BE AN ACTOR STEREOTYPE, BUT I DO KINDA MISS THE APPLAUSE.
I WOULD HOPE FOR A THANK-YOU AT SOME POINT...
THEY KNOW THAT IT'S NOT KINDNESS THAT MAKES US DO IT, BUT COMPULSION.
THEY KNOW THAT THE MONSTROUS TRANSFORMATION COULD AWAIT ANY OF THEM...

...AND THEY KNOW THAT IF THAT DAY COMES, WE'LL COME FOR THEM, TOO.
DO NOT EXPECT ANYONE TO CHEER A HANGMAN'S AXE WHEN THEY TOO ARE ON THE BLOCK.
AND, IKARIS, YOU FIGHT AS IF YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN OUR CURSE.
THOSE COSMIC BRANDS WERE DAMAGING YOU. IT'S UNLIKELY IT'D KILL YOU, BUT THERE'S STILL A CHANCE...
YOU ARE RIGHT, PHASTOS. I MUST BE BETTER...
...BUT I HAVE NO IDEA HOW.
WHAT NOW? I'M TRYING TO FIND THE FORGOTTEN ONE BUT GETTING NOWHERE. HE MUST BE IN A WORSE STATE THAN YOU, IKARIS, WITH THE GUILT...
WITH LUCK, HE AND HIS KIN ARE DOING WHAT WE ARE DOING--WORKING OUT HOW TO MAKE AMENDS.
COME WITH ME, KINGO. YOU CAN HELP WITH MY WORK...
HEY, I GET IT. YOU NEED SOMEONE TO BRING THE LOCAL EQUIVALENT TO COFFEE.
SO...IS THERE ANY PROGRESS ON WORKING OUT HOW TO SOLVE A PROBLEM LIKE THANOS, THE MAD TITAN?
A LITTLE. WITH THE HOLE IN MY MEMORY, I'M STARTING FROM SCRATCH.
BUT I HAVE THE BEST AND WORST MOTIVATION. I WON'T REST. I CAN'T REST.
GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PENANCE.
I MUST TURN TO MINE...
...I NEED TO LEARN HOW TO FIGHT AS IF I CARE WHETHER I LIVE OR DIE.

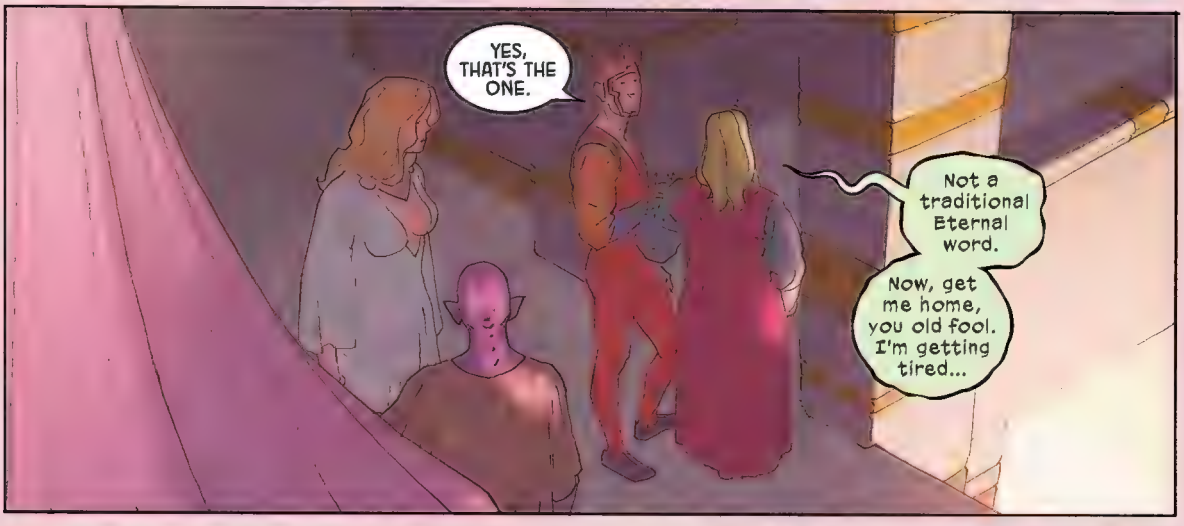

THE EXCLUSION.
DRUIG OPENS HIS EYES, ALIVE AGAIN.
HE TRIES TO REMEMBER HOW THIS CAME TO BE.
HE FINDS NOTHING.
HE TRIES TO CATALOGUE HIS SCHEMES AND FINDS THAT *MONTHS* ARE GONE.
HE LOOKS FOR *ANY* CLUE AS TO WHAT HAPPENED...
...AND HE FINDS ONE.
WELCOME BACK, DRUIG.

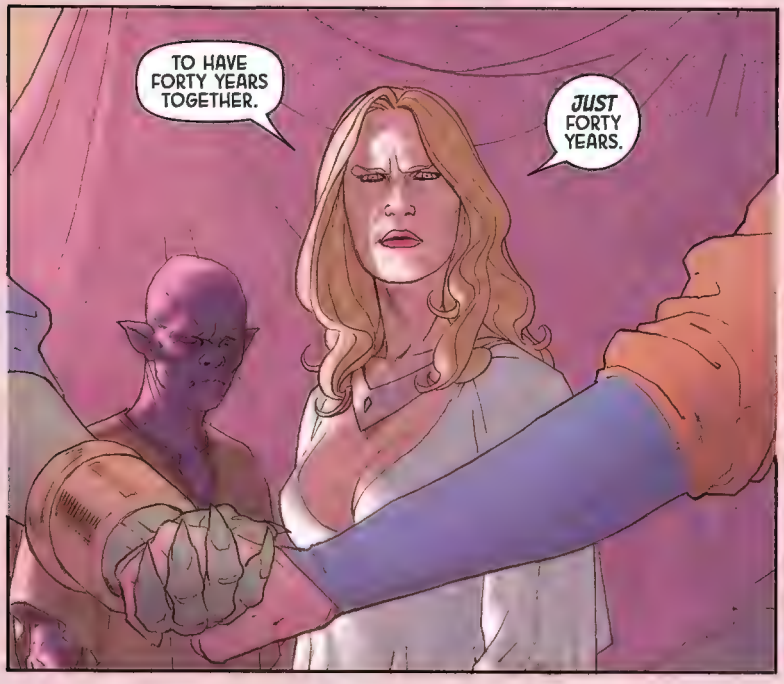
HE QUASHES THE HORROR OF MEETING ONE OF THE UNIVERSE'S FAMED KILLERS, AN EXPERIENCE MADE WORSE BY KNOWING THAT LOGICALLY IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME HE HAS MET THE MONSTER.
YOU ARE PRIME ETERNAL. SOMEHOW I ASSISTED IN THIS...
THERE IS *SOMETHING* I KNEW THAT YOU DON'T WANT ME TO KNOW.
YOU KILLED ME AND *WIPED* ALL MY RECENT MEMORIES.
NOW YOU ARE TIED TO ME. ACT LIKE IT.
YOU'RE NOT MEPHISTO, BUT IF YOU KEEP WORKING ON IT, YOU WILL MAKE A SUITABLE UNDERSTUDY OF A LICKSPITTLE.
SOME COULD NOT TAKE THIS HUMILIATION...
...BUT THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF SNAKES...
DRUIG UNHINGES HIS JAW AND SWALLOWS IT. HE LETS IT DISTEND HIS BELLY...
MASTERFULLY DONE.
HOW CAN I SERVE YOU?
HE WILL DIGEST THIS SHAME SLOWLY.
A NEW BODY.
THANOS MUST BE WHOLE AGAIN.
DRUIG SEES THE DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR CREEPING IN... BUT ALSO KNOWS HE MUST HAVE UNDERESTIMATED THANOS BEFORE.
HE SWEARS TO AVOID MAKING THE SAME MISTAKE AGAIN, WHILE NOT KNOWING WHAT HIS MISTAKE WAS.
DRUIG WALKS INTO A MINEFIELD AND PRAYS.

I'm surprised anyone actually turned up to the launch.
I thought everyone would be too afraid of my houseguests...
YOU THINK SO LITTLE OF YOUR WORK...
THIS IS BEAUTIFUL.
YOU HAVE MADE YOUR PAIN BEAUTIFUL.
THIS IS KHORYPHOS. HE IS THE LYRE, AND A LYRE SPEAKS ONLY TRUTH.
ONCE, HE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE DEVIANT ARTIST YRDISIS AND HER WORK. HE LEFT OLYMPIA TO BE WITH HER...
...FORTY YEARS AGO.


Ah, Thena. You have my sympathies. Khory and I were two artists, which is a different axis.
In loving Tolau, you find yourself a muse.
I HAVE BEEN PUT ON A PEDESTAL MANY TIMES. BUT THIS IS DIFFERENT...
THIS IS ALL DIFFERENT.
IT IS. YRDY AND I FACED SO MUCH HATE FROM EVERYONE FOR OUR LOVE.
IT WILL BE DIFFICULT, BUT YOU ALL COMING HERE COULD BE THE START OF SOMETHING...

...THE START OF SOMETHING...
WHAT'S THE WORD, YRDY?
New.


YES, THAT'S THE ONE.
Not a traditional Eternal word.
Now, get me home, you old fool. I'm getting tired...


TO HAVE FORTY YEARS TOGETHER.
JUST FORTY YEARS.

Forty years at best, Thena...

...and things in this world are rarely best.
WHAT? WHAT IS THIS?
Early stages, but it's developing worryingly fast. It's "the Change."
You call it..."Excess Deviation."
Soon I'll be consumed, and then...
You know the rest.
NO! WHEN DID THIS START? WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?
It was only yesterday. It's *especially* virulent.
Shortly after mighty Kro's visit.
KRO.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO IN LEMURIA (PART VII)

LEMURIAN GLADIATORIAL COMBAT 101

Some say that the Deviants are a culture fascinated with violence. They would argue that you'd be fascinated with violence too if you had a group of immortal, super-powered literal killing machines looking to Correct you for Deviating Excessively any time you looked at them funny.

While the average Lemurian is not a fighter, many have a strong interest in those who are. Gladiators are entertainers and are respected as artists, actors and etheric-field-smiths.

However, the Deviants are the Changing people. This includes tastes in culture, and gladiatorial combat is not always popular. Sometimes, its fighters are superstars, hailed in Lemurian culture and mobbed in the streets. Sometimes, they're just two people beating the hell out of each other in a park for coins.

At the moment, it's the latter.

THE REJECT

A.K.A.: Ransak, the Killing Machine, Sweet Prince, Warhead

An expert in power rods, trained from birth in the art of violence and in possession of a streak of rage unparalleled inside Deviant society, the Reject is a gladiatorial fighter with no current peers inhabiting Lemuria.

Quote: "ARGGGHHHHHHH!!"

KARKAS

A.K.A.: Karkas the Kind, Karkas Eternal-friend, Karkas the Regularly Defeated.

Karkas' nearly invulnerable form would make him an ideal gladiator were it not for a distinct lack of interest. A poet and a philosopher, he still gets involved in gladiatorial bouts because they still pay significantly better than poetry and philosophy.

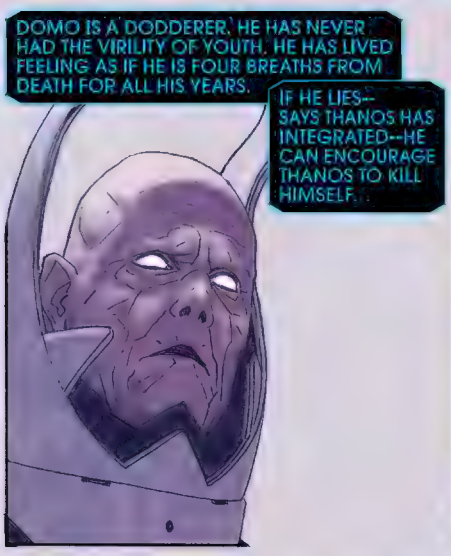
Quote: "One who walks away from a fight with friends cannot be said to have truly lost."

He's so *hideous.* Monstrous.
Do you think something so warped can even understand us?
Ignore them, friend.
You are just as twisted on the inside. That's something. Beauty is only skin-deep.
Karkas, that's easy to say when you're as comely as you are.
To be as hideous as I am...
...it leaves me in most ill spirits.
HAIL!
Eternals! Run!
Great, there goes our audience. A few would have paid to see the show.
So...we heard you had set up in town. To what do we owe this patronage from our betters?
Reject! Ikaris clearly needs something...and has come to us. That is *brave.*
How can we help you, old friend?

I NEED TO LEARN HOW NOT TO FIGHT LIKE AN ETERNAL. I NEED TO FIGHT LIKE A DEVIANT, AS IF MY LIFE MATTERED.
YOU ARE THE GREATEST OF DEVIANT FIGHTERS, REJECT. TEACH ME.
PLEASE.
Oh. I see.
BOFF
You should have dodged that.
DODGING.
TELL ME ABOUT THIS "DODGING."

OLYMPIA.
ZURAS HAS BEEN TEMPORARILY RESTRAINED IN EXCLUSION FOR HIS OPEN REVOLT AGAINST THE UNI-MIND.
IT'S NOT PERMANENT-- WE'LL NEED TO WIN ANOTHER VOTE, WHICH WE CAN'T RISK...BUT YOU HAVE A LITTLE SPACE TO ACT AND BE HEALED.
HOW GO THE ACTS OF UNIMAGINABLE CELESTIAL SCIENCE, DOMO?
THE PRIME ETERNAL IS ALREADY BONDED WITH THE MACHINE IN CERTAIN ASPECTS.
WITH LUCK, WE WILL BE ABLE TO CONNECT THE REST, AND HE CAN SIMPLY BE REBORN IN THE RESURRECTION CHAMBERS.
AND IF WE HAVE LUCK, YOU WILL STILL LIVE.
BEGIN.
ZAT
FZZZZZAT

HAS IT WORKED?
IT HASN'T.
DOMO CONSIDERS THE MERITS OF LYING.


DOMO IS A DODDERER. HE HAS NEVER HAD THE VIRILITY OF YOUTH. HE HAS LIVED FEELING AS IF HE IS FOUR BREATHS FROM DEATH FOR ALL HIS YEARS.
IF HE LIES--SAYS THANOS HAS INTEGRATED--HE CAN ENCOURAGE THANOS TO KILL HIMSELF.

...BUT THANOS SAW THROUGH WHATEVER SCHEME DRUIG WAS TRYING, AND DRUIG IS A FAR GRANDER LIAR THAN HE...
THE RISK IS NOT WORTH IT. HE IS MOST FOND OF THOSE FOUR BREATHS.
NO, PRIME ETERNAL.

PHASTOS DID NOT MAKE THIS BODY TO LAST. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE EVEN ACHIEVED PARTIAL INTEGRATION... AND YOUR CONCERN THAT WE WILL ACTIVATE THE FAIL-SAFE IF YOU LET US EXAMINE YOU CLOSELY MEANS MY ROUTES OF RESEARCH ARE DISTINCTLY LIMITED.
TO MAKE PROGRESS, YOU NEED PHASTOS...

YOU DO WELL, DOMO. I AM PLEASED TO HAVE SUCH A DEVOTED SERVANT IN MY SERVICE.
I REWARD LOYALTY. YOU ARE NOW MY PRIME ADVISOR IN MATTERS OF SCIENCE...

...BUT YOU FAILED, AND THANOS WILL NOT BE A LIAR.
MACHINE: PUSH DOMO TO THE FRONT OF THE RESURRECTION LINES.
AFFIRMATIVE.
MOST GENEROUS AND WISE, PRIME ETERNAL.
I CAN SEE YOU ARE NO SIMPLE DICTATOR.
THERE IS NOTHING "SIMPLE" ABOUT ME.
AND...WE NEED PHASTOS. WHAT FORCES CAN I LEAD INTO BATTLE?
YOU HAVE A VARIETY OF OPTIONS...WITH STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.
WHICH TO TAKE DEPENDS ON YOUR PRIORITIES. LET ME MAKE THIS EASY...
NUMBERS. TRUSTWORTHINESS. COMPLETE LACK OF ANYTHING ONE COULD DESCRIBE AS ETHICS.
PICK TWO.
HMM. LACK OF ETHICS...LAST THING I NEED IS SQUEAMISHNESS HALFWAY THROUGH A GENOCIDE.
AND...TRUST. I NEED TO TRUST THOSE WHO MARCH ALONGSIDE ME INTO BATTLE AS MUCH AS I TRUST... DOMO.
AH. I THINK I KNOW JUST THE ETERNALS FOR YOU...
I THINK IT'S TIME TO MEET THE OCEANIC WATCH.

THE OCEANIC WATCH

OCEANUS

SHASTRA THYRIO

ARGII ARLOK ASTRON

KALOS THE DESTRUCTOR

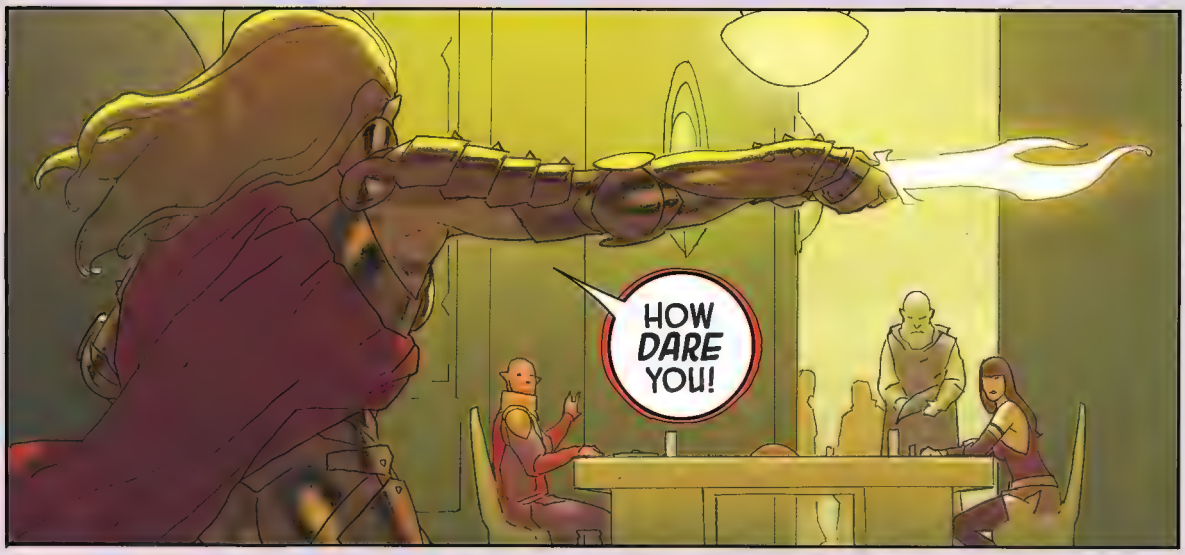
The first major schism in Eternal society was the Uranite Heresy. Amongst other things, Uranos argued in favor of annihilation of all other beings on Earth. After his defeat, his followers fled into space. Eventually, they died, and the Eternals among them were resurrected by the Machine. This created a dilemma. What to do with them?

While he had committed no crime, Oceanus, the brother of the excluded Uranos and Kronos, was suspicious of his own capacity for potential infamy. He volunteered to lead them. From a citadel overlooking Lemuria, they would form a doomsday watch, ready to act, but only with the Prime Eternal's express command.

All in the Oceanic Watch, Oceanus argued, had proven their reason dangerously flawed. As such, they should act as if they were weapons in wiser hands.

As such they remain: a sword in a scabbard, ready to be drawn...

WELL, LET'S PUT ASIDE THE WHOLE "TWO PEOPLES LOCKED IN AN ENDLESS STRUGGLE" THING...
ON AVERAGE, THEY'RE EVEN MORE SHORTLY LIVED THAN THE HUMANS, AND WITH EVEN WORSE...ASSOCIATED RISKS.
So, Sersi. One has to ask...
Why the aversion to dating Deviants?
I'm not like other Deviants.
I have lived for twenty thousand years.
OH, DEAREST KRO, YOU SWEET SUMMER CHILD.
YOU'RE BARELY A BABY.
KRO!


HOW DARE YOU!

It's just dinner. I had no idea--
OH PLEASE. IT'S NOT ABOUT HAVING DINNER WITH SERSI. JEALOUSY IS PETTY, AND I AM ABOVE THAT.
BUT MURDERING TOLAU IS SOMETHING ELSE.
HE IS DEVIATING. HE'S GOING TO BECOME A MONSTER. IT STARTED SHORTLY AFTER YOU VISITED.
IF YOU'VE POISONED HIM, CURE HIM, OR I'LL--

We prefer "the Change."
And if I could cause the Change, I would not use it against someone. I would not be so cruel.
The Change is the tragedy of our people.

I'm so sorry, Thena.
I would not wish this on anyone, let alone you.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
You will either leave him to turn into a monster alone or--when your instincts take over--you will be the one to kill him.
I WILL NEVER KILL HIM!
I SHOULD GO. THE MOOD HAS BEEN QUITE BROKEN.
BUT THIS IS A DEMONSTRATION OF WHY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OUR KINDS ARE RISKY. WHETHER IN WEEKS OR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS, *THAT* IS ALWAYS THERE AS A THREAT...
OH... ONE MORE THING.
DID YOU INVITE ME TO DINNER TO MAKE THENA JEALOUS?
One can do things for multiple reasons.
WELL PLAYED.
MORE THAN MOST, I UNDERSTAND...

"...OUR MOTIVATIONS ARE COMPLICATED."
COME OUT, COME OUT, WHEREVER YOU ARE...
HMM. I THOUGHT YOU WERE BETTER THAN THIS.
I AM.
YOU ONLY KNEW I WAS HERE BECAUSE I WANTED YOU TO KNOW.
THERE'RE NAMES FOR INVISIBLE PEOPLE WHO HANG AROUND WATCHING OTHERS CHANGE, AND NONE OF THEM ARE POLITE.
SO CHIVALROUS, JACK. I WASN'T GOING TO GET UNDRESSED, BUT I APPRECIATE THE THOUGHT.
THE DRESS IS JUST REMIXED MOLECULES. BUT THE EARRINGS...
SOMETHING SPECIAL?
THEY'RE A GIFT FROM AN OLD FRIEND. SENTIMENTAL VALUE. WHICH MEANS THAT THEY'RE NOT WORTH ANYTHING TO ANYONE ELSE, YET THEY'RE INSUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO ME TO BE USED AS BLACKMAIL MATERIAL.
JUST IN CASE YOUR MISCHIEVOUS LITTLE MIND WAS STARTING TO CALCULATE...
SO... HOW DID IT GO WITH IKARIS?

FOR A SECOND, I THOUGHT IKARIS WAS STILL GOING TO TELL THE FAMILY, EVEN AFTER THE THREAT... BUT YOU WERE RIGHT. HE CAVED.
HE MADE SOME KIND OF DEAL WITH THEM TO SALVE HIS CONSCIENCE A LITTLE AND LEFT.
YES--THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE HE'D DO SOMETHING STUPID, BUT...
...HE KNOWS THAT *YOU* ARE ENTIRELY CAPABLE OF FOLLOWING THROUGH ON YOUR THREATS. IN HIS CURRENT THROES OF GUILT, HE'D NEVER TAKE THAT RISK...
...SO HE'LL NEVER DISCOVER THAT I PAID YOU TO *MAKE* THE THREAT BUT NOT ACTUALLY TO FOLLOW THROUGH.
I WARN YOU--HE'LL HOLD A GRUDGE.
HEY, IT'S WHAT YOU'RE PAYING ME FOR. I'M NOT AFRAID OF HIM.
GOOD DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU.
I'D OFFER A DRINK, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHERE TOLAU KEEPS THE BETTER CLASS OF BEVERAGES, AND...WELL, IT'D BE *UNFORTUNATE* FOR US TO BE SEEN TOGETHER.
DON'T WORRY. HE'S NOT GOING TO WALK IN. IKARIS IS STILL LEARNING HOW TO BE PUNCHED IN THE FACE...
...PLUS, I'VE GOT A PRIOR ENGAGEMENT.
THE TRICKS ARE HAVING DRINKS OF OUR OWN.
BIG DAY FOR US WORKING STIFFS. I THINK MAYBE WE SWUNG THE ELECTION.
WAIT.
WHO WAS ELECTED PRIME ETERNAL?

EVERYONE! LISTEN!
HEY, TAKE A BEAT, SERSI.
KINGO, PLEASE! THIS IS ABSOLUTELY THE TIME FOR PSYCHIC SCREAMING!
WE SHOULD HAVE PAID ATTENTION. ZURAS' ANGER IS ONE THING, BUT...
OH, WE ARE SUCH FOOLS.
THANOS IS--
KKKKKKKKK

THE KING OF THE EARTH IS HERE. HE AND HIS LOYAL SERVANTS ONLY WISH TO GATHER OUR RIGHTFUL TRIBUTE.
PHASTOS.
PHASTOS AND YOUR LIVES.

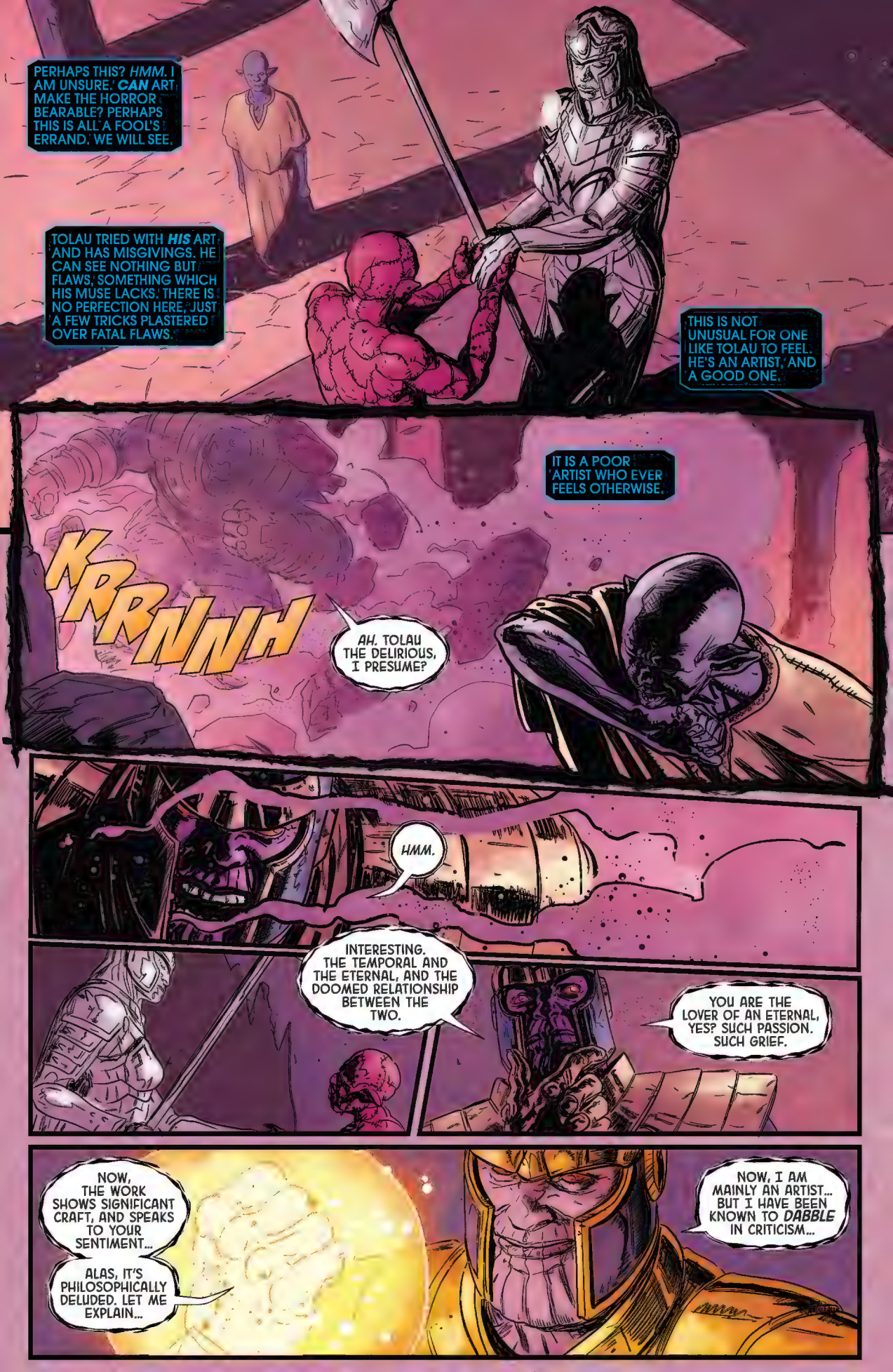
I SWEAR, I'M NOT JUDGING YOU WHEN I SAY THIS: IF YOU WERE HERE, YOU'D BE PANICKING.
EVERYONE! BROADCASTING LOCATIONS OF THE INCOMING FORCES. PICK YOUR PARTNERS...
IKARIS, IF YOU'D DO THE FIRST STRIKE HONORS...
BEFORE I DRAW ANOTHER BREATH, THEY WILL BREATHE THEIR LAST, SERSI.
LUCKILY, THE ETERNALS ARE A MACHINE.
THEY ACT SMOOTHLY, EFFICIENTLY.
THENA! QUIT WITH THE SNUGGLING! FIGHT TIME!
Sprite? I...I don't understand.
What's happening?
TOLAU, MY LOVE, THIS IS A PART OF ME I HOPED YOU'D NEVER SEE. DO NOT ENDANGER YOURSELF. STAY HERE.
THE ETERNALS MUST FIGHT...
PHASTOS--STAY WHERE YOU ARE, KINGO--YOU'RE THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE.
BODYGUARD TO A WIZENED SEER, IN DEFENSE OF THE KINGDOM...
IT'S A REACH, BUT I CAN DO THAT.
ME.
THANOS HAS COME FOR ME.
YES, I SUSPECT HE HAS, PHASTOS.
SO DO KEEP ON WITH YOUR WORK. SEE IF YOU CAN FIND A WAY FOR *US* TO COME FOR *HIM*...
IT IS A ***PERFECT*** MACHINE, MOVING TO SAVE THE CITY THEY NOW CALL HOME.
THERE IS ONE PROBLEM. THANOS HAS DEPLOYED ***THE OCEANIC WATCH***...

...AND THEY ARE PERFECT TOO.
LEMURIA,
UNDER ATOMIC FIRE FROM THE HANDS OF ANGELS OF DESTRUCTION.
BOOOM
BOOM

REMEMBER: IF WE KILL PHASTOS, HE WILL BE REBORN IN THE WOMB OF THE MACHINE.
THERE IS NO NEED TO BE GENTLE.
ZZUM
KA-BOOM
THE FIRMAMENT REMAINS INTACT. WERE YOU NOT LISTENING?
I SAID, "DO NOT BE GENTLE."
FOOO

FOO
THE EXPLOSIONS ARE PRETTY, YES?
THANKFULLY, THERE IS ONE WEAPON IN THEIR ARSENAL WHICH IS MORE POTENT...
...AN ARROW.
BOOM
STILL, THE OCEANIC WATCH HAVE THE NUMBERS AND DUSTY, POTENT DOOMSDAY WEAPONS...
THEY CAN MORE EASILY FIND THEIR TARGETS. THEIR FOES HAVE A WHOLE CITY TO CONSIDER.
...PLUS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT ONCE YOU HAVE DOOMSDAY WEAPONS, ANY DAY YOU CHOOSE CAN BE DOOMSDAY...
...BUT OUR HEROES ALSO HAVE ADVANTAGES.
PLUS HAVING TO SORT REAL FOES FROM SPRITE'S ILLUSIONS.
AND MOST OF ALL?

THANOS HAS NOT YET DIRECTLY JOINED THE FRAY.
HE WOULD LOVE TO DO SO. BUT HE IS A CONQUEROR, NOT A BERSERKER.
HE WOULD RATHER WIN THAN SIMPLY DESTROY THE CITY.
HE CAN WORK WITH PRECISION, THE SLICE OF A SCALPEL...
...HE JUST NEEDS TO KNOW ***WHERE TO CUT.***
YOU KNOW WHO I AM AND WHAT I COULD DO TO YOU.
WHERE ARE THE ETERNALS LODGING?
THE DEVIANT IS UNAWARE OF WHO THANOS IS, BUT THINKS BETTER OF SAYING SO.
IT WANTS TO LIVE AND IS UNAWARE THAT WAS NEVER A POSSIBILITY.
Tolau the Delirious. The artist. He's having an exhibition at the Spire of Mettu.
It's there on that--
A SECOND FROM NOW, THERE WILL BE THE SOUND OF SUPER-HUMAN MUSCLE RENDERING THE DEVIANT'S JAW INTO PASTE.
I'M SORRY. THIS IS UNBEARABLE. MAYBE I CAN FIND A LESS ***DISTURBING*** WAY TO SHOW YOU THIS WORLD?


PERHAPS THIS? *HMM.* I AM UNSURE. ***CAN*** ART MAKE THE HORROR BEARABLE? PERHAPS THIS IS ALL A FOOL'S ERRAND. WE WILL SEE.
TOLAU TRIED WITH ***HIS*** ART AND HAS MISGIVINGS. HE CAN SEE NOTHING BUT FLAWS, SOMETHING WHICH HIS MUSE LACKS. THERE IS NO PERFECTION HERE, JUST A FEW TRICKS PLASTERED OVER FATAL FLAWS.
THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR ONE LIKE TOLAU TO FEEL. HE'S AN ARTIST, AND A GOOD ONE.
IT IS A POOR ARTIST WHO EVER FEELS OTHERWISE.
KRRNNH
AH. TOLAU THE DELIRIOUS, I PRESUME?
HMM.
INTERESTING. THE TEMPORAL AND THE ETERNAL, AND THE DOOMED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO.
YOU ARE THE LOVER OF AN ETERNAL, YES? SUCH PASSION. SUCH GRIEF.
NOW, THE WORK SHOWS SIGNIFICANT CRAFT, AND SPEAKS TO YOUR SENTIMENT...
ALAS, IT'S PHILOSOPHICALLY DELUDED. LET ME EXPLAIN...
NOW, I AM MAINLY AN ARTIST... BUT I HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ***DABBLE*** IN CRITICISM...

...AND, OF COURSE, GREAT CRITICISM IS ART TOO.
SKAAK
SEE, NOTHING IS ETERNAL.
NOT HER. NOT LOVE. NOTHING.
NOW, I WOULD NOT INSULT YOU BY ASKING YOU TO BETRAY HER.
YOUR LOVE WOULD NOT PERMIT YOU TO.
I WILL SIMPLY LET HER LOVE FOR YOU BE MY WEAPON...
YOU SEE, ALL ART IS A WEAPON, AND ALL WEAPONS ARE ART...

THANOS! LEAVE HIM BE!
SEE, TOLAN? I TOLD YOU. HERE SHE COMES.
HER WEAKNESS BROUGHT HER RUNNING.
YOU ARE A FOOL TO MOCK LOVE. LOVERS ACHIEVE THE GRANDEST THINGS.
YOUR LOVE BROUGHT YOU TO NEARLY DESTROY THE UNIVERSE, THANOS.
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT LOVE IS POWER.
DO NOT MATCH WITS WITH ME WHEN MY HAND IS AROUND HIS THROAT...
WHERE IS THE SMITH?
Don't. I'm going to die anyway. It isn't worth it...
Him killing me would be a mercy.
THENA IS A CREATURE OF THE HEART...BUT ALSO THE HEAD. SHE HAS MADE MANY CALCULATIONS HERE.
IN THE CELLARS BENEATH THE TAKARINA EXPRESS.
SHE TELEPATHICALLY PULSES HIM THE COORDINATES AND SHOWS ENOUGH OF HERSELF TO LET THANOS KNOW SHE SPEAKS TRUTH..

THANK YOU, THENA. NOW, LITTLE ARTIST, I HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU!
I UNDERSTAND WORKS INCREASE IN VALUE WHEN THEIR CREATORS ARE DEAD.
I'M SURE OUR COLLABORATION WILL PROVIDE A FORTUNE FOR GRIEVING THENA.
...
WAIT...
I SENSE THE TRAGEDY HERE...
KILLING YOU *WOULD* BE A MERCY...
...AND I WILL NOT SUFFER THE SLANDER THAT I AM MERCIFUL.
THANOS LEAVES. THERE ARE ETERNALS WHO WOULD BE UPON HIM IN RAGE IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT HIM. NOT THENA.
EVEN NOW, THENA TIGHTROPES BETWEEN THE HEART AND THE HEAD.
EVERYONE-- THANOS IS INCOMING. I'VE SENT HIM TOWARD PHASTOS.
You fool, Thena. You shouldn't have...
BETTER THANOS COME DIRECTLY FOR US THAN RAZE THE WHOLE CITY.
THIS WILL SAVE LIVES.
No, I meant no matter what you did, it is too late to save me...

The Change has begun.
Step back. Go. Please.
We know what happens.
I DO, BUT I WON'T LEAVE YOU.
You'll kill me! You can't do that to yourself!
You will carry the anger and shame inside you. You should not bear the weight of that violence...
I WON'T.
I...
SHE THINKS OF THE POWER OF LOVE OVERCOMING WHAT THE CELESTIALS PLACED INSIDE HER.
SHE WILL RESIST. SHE WON'T STRIKE.
YES. TOLAU WOULD BECOME A MONSTER, BUT SHE WOULD NURSE HIM.
AND OVER THE YEARS, SHE'D FIND A CURE, AND THEY'D BE REUNITED...
I WON'T LEAVE YOU.
THAT WOULD BE A WONDERFUL STORY, WOULDN'T IT?

IT'S NOT TRUE, AND SHE KNOWS IT, AND YOU KNEW IT TOO.
GRRK
IN REALITY, THE TRUTH IS SIMPLE.
SHE COULD NEVER LEAVE TOLAU ALONE WITH THE PAIN...
EXCESS DEVIATION.
AND SHE THOUGHT: "SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TO KILL TOLAU.
"IT IS BETTER THAT IT'S SOMEONE WHO LOVES HIM...
"...AS MUCH AS THERE IS ANY 'BETTER' HERE."

THENA'S WARNING REACHES KINGO, AND HE IS POISED AND READY. AN ACTOR KNOWS WHAT TO DO WHEN A DIRECTOR CALLS "ACTION."
EVEN IF THE OTHER PLAYERS DON'T...
MY EQUIPMENT! MY WORK! IT--
IS GOING TO BE ANNIHILATED, ALONG WITH EVERYTHING.
WE MUST GO. WE MUST--
BOOM
MORE DEAD. EVERY SECOND WE HIDE, THERE'RE MORE BODIES.
IT CANNOT BE BORNE. IT...
I HAVE TO STOP THIS.

AND DON'T YOU TRY TO STOP ME. I'M NOT SACRIFICING MYSELF OR... I'M NOT JUST SACRIFICING MYSELF. I'M BUYING US TIME.
LISTEN!
YOU HAVE TO CONTINUE MY WORK.
ER...I KNOW YOU'RE UNDER STRESS, BUT I'M KINGO. I CAN DO BODYGUARD, BUT I CAN'T DO SCIENTIST.
I'M NOT DOMO OR SYGMAR OR...WELL, YOU.
WHAT I KNOW: THANOS IS AN ETERNAL...
...BUT HE IS ALSO A DEVIANT.
WHATEVER HIS PARENTS DID TO MAKE HIM HAS SOMETHING OF THE CHANGING PEOPLE IN IT.
WHATEVER I DID TO HIM WOULD BE CONNECTED TO THAT.
WE NEED TO UNCOVER THE DEEPEST SECRETS OF THE DEVIANTS.
GREAT! DEEPEST SECRETS. GOT IT.
PROBLEM: I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO UNCOVER THEM!
THAT'S GOOD! I DON'T EITHER.
SEE--I TOLD YOU YOU COULD DO THIS. NOW RUN!
THANOS! YOU WANT ME?
HERE I--

KRRRKKNNH
YOU OPENED ME UP ON YOUR WORKBENCH AND PERFORMED WITH ALL YOUR ARTISTRY.
I RETURN THE COMPLIMENT.
THE SMITH IS DEAD. HIS BODY WILL BE REFORMED BACK IN THE EXCLUSION. HE IS *OURS.*
OUR WORK IS DONE. OUR PLAY BEGINS.
PURGE THIS CITY!
MY LORD! AS MUCH AS I HATE TO INTRUDE WHEN YOU'RE CLEARLY HAVING SUCH A DELIGHTFUL TIME...

OLYMPIA.
...BUT THE LONGER YOU STAY IN LEMURIA, THE LONGER YOU RISK LOSING A MEMBER OF THE WATCH. THEY'LL BE TRYING TO CAPTURE THEM, NOT KILL THEM.
THEY ARE THE TOOL MOST ALIGNED WITH YOUR GOALS. YOU'VE WON TODAY, AND YOU'LL NEED THEM AGAIN. I WOULD ADVISE AGAINST RISKING THEM...
HMPH.
THE WATCH. GO.
NO BLOODY ENCORE TODAY.
THEY'RE LEAVING.
WE'VE WON.
THERE'S NO "WIN" HERE.
MY EXPERIMENT IS A FAILURE. NO MATTER HOW I SHOW YOU THIS, THE HORROR REMAINS. IF ART IS TO BE ART, IT HAS TO BE TRUE...

LEMURIA: OVERVIEW OF CASUALTIES

... AND THE TRUTH *IS* UNBEARABLE.

WOULD IT REDUCE YOUR HORROR IF I TOLD YOU THAT I'M PRESENTING ONE OF THE AREAS WHERE CASUALTIES WERE CONCENTRATED?

NOT ALL THE CITY WAS AS BADLY STRUCK, AND NOT ALL THOSE MARKED ARE DEAD.

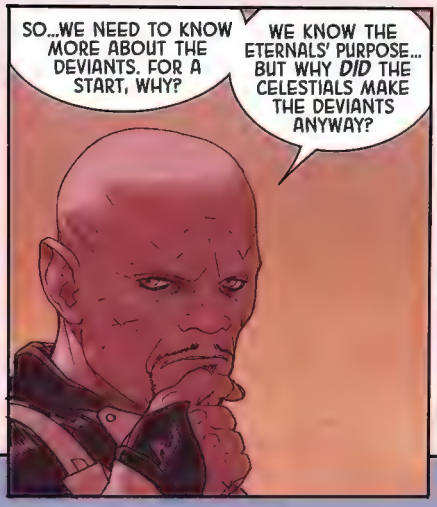
SOME ARE STILL BREATHING, BURIED BENEATH TONS OF MOLTEN MASONRY. OTHERS ROCK BACK AND FORTH, NURSING BURNS FROM COSMIC FIRE. OTHERS HAVE JUST LOST LIMBS, EYES, HOPE.

DOES THAT MAKE IT BETTER?

HOPEFULLY NOT.
ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKE LEAST ABOUT HUMANS IS THAT TIRESOME DESIRE TO FIND SILVER LININGS ON CLOUDS OF TOXIC GAS.
STILL, IN THIS TRAIT, HUMANS ARE NOT ALONE...
It is a disaster, but not unexpected. The Oceanic Watch have waited outside our kingdom hoping for a day like this.
It's not the first time they've come calling, and it won't be the last.
As a people, we are somewhat inured to being murdered by Eternals.
WE'RE NOT LIKE THAT.
So you say.
That said, if you were like that, is there anything you could do about it?
ARE YOU BEING JOKEY, STOIC OR BITTER?
Why choose? In times of hell, the only option we have is how we choose to accept its burden.
When all meaningful choices are taken from us, who can blame me for taking all the choices that remain?
And--
KRO HAS KNOWN THENA FOR NEARLY TWENTY THOUSAND YEARS. HE HAS LOVED HER AND LOST HER. HE FOUNDED KINGDOMS IN THE DISTANT PAST WITH HER. MOST OF ALL?
HE KNOWS HER. YES, THENA IS ONE WHO WOULD WEEP FOR THE HORROR THAT SURROUNDS HER...
...BUT THIS GRIEF IS MORE SPECIFIC.
I'm sorry.
He was a great artist.

THE CHANGE KILLED HIM, AND I KILLED WHAT REMAINED.
...IT SHOULD NOT BE LIKE THIS.
Yes, but it is.
We are coded to change. You are coded to kill. What is there but that?
"PREVENT EXCESS DEVIATION."
THE BEST WAY TO DO THAT WOULD BE TO ENSURE EXCESS DEVIATION DID NOT HAPPEN.
Prevention rather than the murderous cure?
Not a new idea. Deviant scientists have spent lifetimes working on it.
A BRIEF SPAN, FOR US. IF THERE IS A WAY, I'LL FIND IT.
IT IS THE LEAST WE CAN DO AFTER...
...ALL OF THIS.
THE GESTURE CAPTURES AN ENDLESS WAR. THE DEVIANTS HAVE BEEN AGGRESSORS MANY TIMES. THE ETERNALS HAVE HAD THEIR GENOCIDAL MOMENTS...
THE IDEA IT COULD CHANGE SEEMS UNLIKELY, GIVEN THE HISTORY.
BUT CHANGE MUST BEGIN SOMEWHERE. WHY *NOT* HERE?
BUT FIRST, THANOS.

PHASTOS HAS BOUGHT US TIME. HE WON'T SPEAK--AT LEAST NOT QUICKLY.
WE HAVE TO DISCOVER HOW TO KILL THANOS BEFORE THEN...
PHASTOS GAVE ME HIS LEAD: THANOS IS AN ETERNAL, BUT HE IS PART-DEVIANT TOO. PHASTOS THINKS WHATEVER HE DID IS LINKED TO THAT BIT OF HIM.


SO...WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE DEVIANTS. FOR A START, WHY?
WE KNOW THE ETERNALS' PURPOSE... BUT WHY *DID* THE CELESTIALS MAKE THE DEVIANTS ANYWAY?

We have our theories and remnants of Celestial lore, but...
...there would be reluctance in our priesthood to give Eternals access to our vaults at the best of times...and when the streets of Lemuria are full of the dead is far from that.
YES, I'D UNDERSTAND HOW *YOUR* PRIESTHOOD WOULD FEEL SO...

"...BUT IT IS NOT THE *ONLY* PRIESTHOOD."

CELESTIA,

A CONSTRUCTED CONCEPTUAL VALLEY IN THE ANDES, SCULPTED FROM A CONDENSED BELIEF MATRIX.

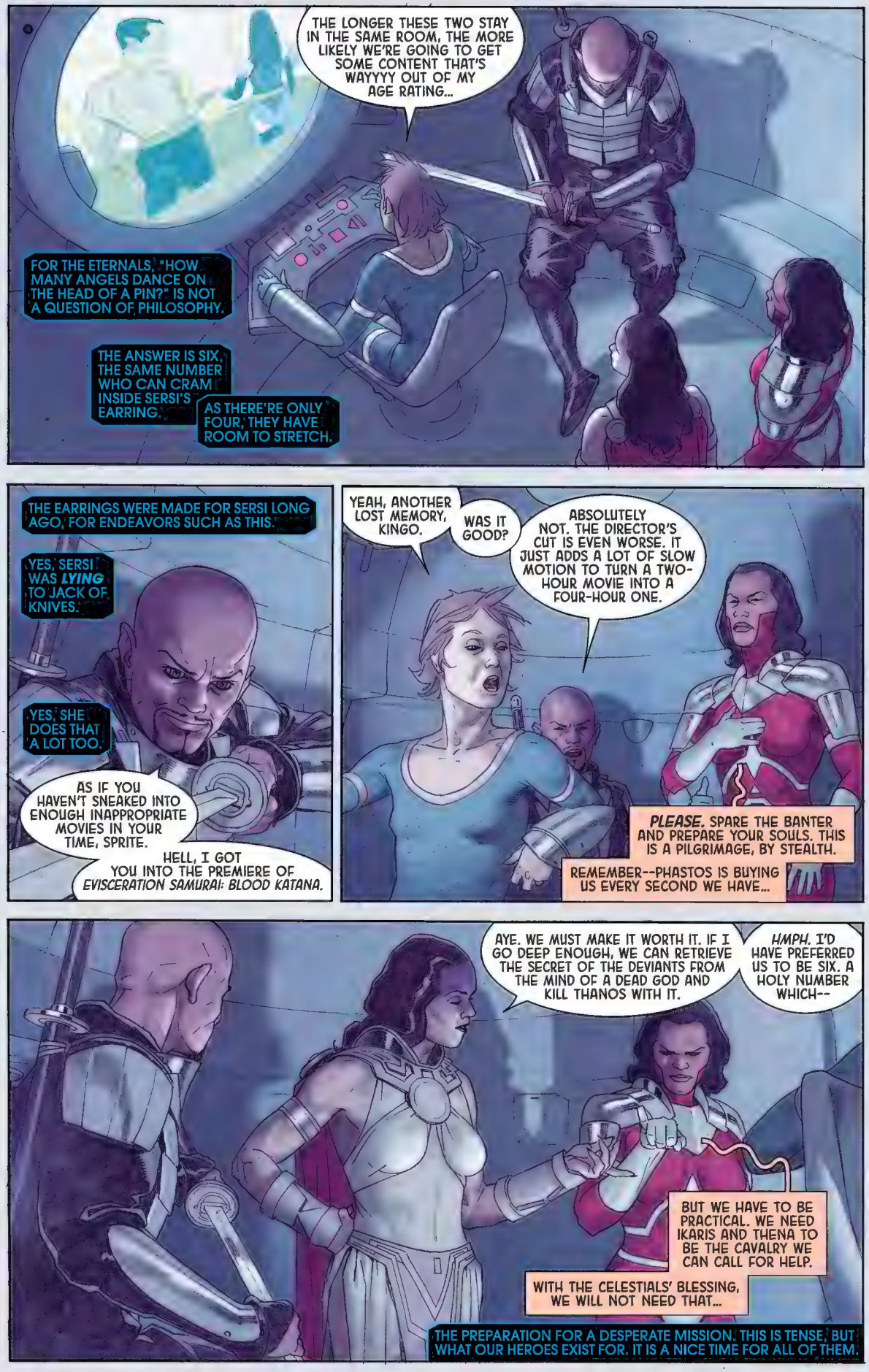
...OF COURSE, THAT WOULD BE HERESY.
OH, EVERYTHING IS HERESY WITH YOU, AJAK.
BUT THIS IS DIFFICULT... TO GAIN TRUE CELESTIAL KNOWLEDGE? THE GODS ARE GONE. THEY DON'T SPEAK TO US.
UNLESS...
YOUR THOUGHTS ECHO MINE, MAKKARI. THE LAST PLACE ON THIS EARTH WHERE WE CAN COMMUNE WITH THOSE THAT MADE US...
ITS GUARDS ARE FEARED ACROSS THE CIVILIZED UNIVERSE. THEY ARE VENGEANCE PERSONIFIED.
TO UNDERSTAND THANOS AND THE DEVIANTS, WE MUST GO DEEP INTO THE LAIR OF OUR GREATEST FOES...
WELL, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT ANYONE ELSE, BUT I'M PETRIFIED.
WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? SOME DUNGEON DEEP BENEATH LEMURIA?
OH, NO. THAT WOULD BE EASY. THESE CREATURES SCURRY INSIDE A GOD-CORPSE...
EVEN OUR BLASPHEMOUS FOES' NAME SHOWS EXACTLY HOW UNFORGIVING THEY ARE...

...WE MUST ENTER THE DOMAIN OF THOSE WHO AVENGE.

AVENGERS MOUNTAIN,
THE NORTH POLE,
THE CORPSE OF A SPACE GOD.
TO DREAM OF INFILTRATING THE AVENGERS' HOME IS AUDACIOUS, EVEN FOR THE ETERNALS. HOW COULD THEY GET IN?
THEY SIMPLY ASKED. AFTER ALL, THEY'RE FRIENDS, AND THEY TRUST EACH OTHER IMPLICITLY--
I DON'T TRUST SERSI. SHE'S UP TO SOMETHING...
NEVER MIND.
THE ETERNALS ARE NOT TELLING US SOMETHING...
STARK, I AM DISAPPOINTED.
WE HAVE HAD OUR DISAGREEMENTS OVER THE YEARS, BUT I THOUGHT WE AGREED ON THE FUNDAMENTALS.
THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD SAY "NO" TO A DATE WITH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN OUT OF FEAR. THIS MAY INCLUDE YOU.
BUT YOU WILL NEVER FIND NAMOR AMONG THEIR NUMBER.

PLEASE, DIAL BACK THE TESTOSTERONE AND LISTEN: EVER SINCE THE ETERNALS HAVE COME BACK, THEY'VE BEEN OFF.
THE CLIMATE MALFUNCTIONING? SURE, THEY ASKED FOR HELP, BUT NOTHING WE DID CHANGED ANYTHING. WE HELPED RESCUE PEOPLE, BUT WE DIDN'T ACTUALLY DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. AND THEIR EXPLANATION? "A BUG IN THE SYSTEM."
"WE TURNED IT OFF AND ON AGAIN AND IT WENT AWAY" DOES NOT MAKE ME FEEL ANY BETTER...
DO NOT WORRY. I HOPE WE WILL REVEAL MANY THINGS TO ONE ANOTHER. PERHAPS IT WILL INCLUDE SECRETS?
DON'T YOU GET IT?! WHY SUGGEST DINNER WITH YOU AND NOT ME? WE'RE FRIENDS. YOU'RE NOT.
AH, NOW I UNDERSTAND...
...YOU'RE JEALOUS.
THERE ARE DAYS I THINK THAT MAN EXISTS TO MAKE ME KNOW HOW OTHER MEN FEEL ABOUT ME.
AND THEY SAY YOU LACK SELF-AWARENESS.
YOU MAY THINK, AT THIS POINT, THAT SERSI HAS A TENDENCY TO GO TO DINNER WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVES A LOT.

THIS WOULD BE CORRECT.
OH MY.
IF I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE A SHOWING-OFF-ONE'S-ABS EVENING, I'D HAVE CHOSEN A MORE PROVOCATIVE OUTFIT...
I CONSIDER MYSELF *TERRIBLY* OVERDRESSED.
WELL, THAT IS EASILY SOLVED...
I HAVE A PRIVATE POOL, PERFECT FOR LIGHT CONVERSATION. I HAD IT SALVAGED FROM ATLANTIS. ITS WATERS ARE HEALING, REFRESHING AND *MOST* STIMULATING...
OH, THIS REMINDS ME OF ROME. THE AMOUNT OF TIME I SPENT IN THE BATHS THEN, YOU WOULD *NOT* BELIEVE. I DO LIKE TO SOAK AND CHAT.
AND AN ATLANTEAN BATH? WONDERFUL. YOU CAN SHARE YOUR CULTURE...
...AND I CAN SHARE MINE.
DID YOU KNOW MANY CIVILIZATIONS BELIEVED ME A GODDESS OF LOVE?
WE HAVE TO GO.
QUICKLYQUICKLYQUICKLY.


THE LONGER THESE TWO STAY IN THE SAME ROOM, THE MORE LIKELY WE'RE GOING TO GET SOME CONTENT THAT'S WAYYYY OUT OF MY AGE RATING...
FOR THE ETERNALS, "HOW MANY ANGELS DANCE ON THE HEAD OF A PIN?" IS NOT A QUESTION OF PHILOSOPHY.
THE ANSWER IS SIX, THE SAME NUMBER WHO CAN CRAM INSIDE SERSI'S EARRING.
AS THERE'RE ONLY FOUR, THEY HAVE ROOM TO STRETCH.
THE EARRINGS WERE MADE FOR SERSI LONG AGO, FOR ENDEAVORS SUCH AS THIS.
YES, SERSI WAS *LYING* TO JACK OF KNIVES.
YES, SHE DOES THAT A LOT TOO.
AS IF YOU HAVEN'T SNEAKED INTO ENOUGH INAPPROPRIATE MOVIES IN YOUR TIME, SPRITE.
HELL, I GOT YOU INTO THE PREMIERE OF *EVISCERATION SAMURAI: BLOOD KATANA.*
YEAH, ANOTHER LOST MEMORY, KINGO.
WAS IT GOOD?
ABSOLUTELY NOT. THE DIRECTOR'S CUT IS EVEN WORSE. IT JUST ADDS A LOT OF SLOW MOTION TO TURN A TWO-HOUR MOVIE INTO A FOUR-HOUR ONE.
PLEASE. SPARE THE BANTER AND PREPARE YOUR SOULS. THIS IS A PILGRIMAGE, BY STEALTH.
REMEMBER--PHASTOS IS BUYING US EVERY SECOND WE HAVE...
AYE. WE MUST MAKE IT WORTH IT. IF I GO DEEP ENOUGH, WE CAN RETRIEVE THE SECRET OF THE DEVIANTS FROM THE MIND OF A DEAD GOD AND KILL THANOS WITH IT.
HMPH. I'D HAVE PREFERRED US TO BE SIX. A HOLY NUMBER WHICH--
BUT WE HAVE TO BE PRACTICAL. WE NEED IKARIS AND THENA TO BE THE CAVALRY WE CAN CALL FOR HELP.
WITH THE CELESTIALS' BLESSING, WE WILL NOT NEED THAT...
THE PREPARATION FOR A DESPERATE MISSION. THIS IS TENSE, BUT WHAT OUR HEROES EXIST FOR. IT IS A NICE TIME FOR ALL OF THEM.

ACTUALLY, NO.
MY MISTAKE.
SOME ARE SUFFERING PAIN UNIMAGINABLE TO MORTAL SYNAPSES.
ARGHHHHH!
TORTURE WON'T MAKE ME TALK.
PERHAPS I JUST WISH TO HURT YOU, PHASTOS.
IF SO, FROM MY PERSPECTIVE, THIS IS WORKING PERFECTLY.
THANOS IS A MONSTER, BUT HE IS ALSO PLAYING THE PART OF A MONSTER. HE IS AWARE HE MUST PROJECT CALLOUSNESS...
...BUT HE IS FRUSTRATED. THIS SADISM BRINGS HIM NO CLOSER TO HIS GOAL.
DRUIG! THE RACK HAS SET HIS NEURONS AFLAME, AND HE STILL DOES NOT TALK. HOW DO I MAKE HIM TELL ME HOW I CAN BE MADE ONE WITH THE MACHINE?
THERE IS THAT FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH--THAT GIVEN A LONG ENOUGH LEVER, YOU CAN MOVE ANYTHING...
THEY SAY THOR'S HAMMER IS IMMOVABLE.
I BET I COULD MOVE IT. ALL I WOULD NEED IS SUFFICIENT LEVERAGE...

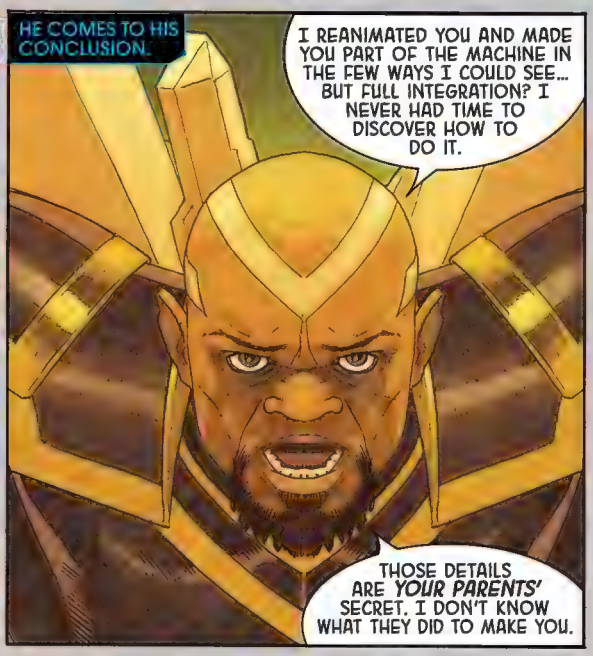
...SPECIFICALLY, SUFFICIENT EMOTIONAL LEVERAGE TO MAKE HIM MOVE IT.
FOR PHASTOS? THREATEN THE HUMANS. IT IS THE OLDEST OF TRICKS.
I DO NOT WISH FOR THE AVENGERS TO KNOW OF MY PRESENCE--NOT UNTIL I AM FULLY READY.
I'M OVERJOYED TO INFORM YOU THAT, AS PRIME ETERNAL, YOU HAVE CERTAIN AVENUES OF DESTRUCTION AVAILABLE TO YOU...
SECRET WEAPONS. DENIABLE WEAPONS.
ONES WHICH WOULD NOT ALERT YOUR FOES...
TELL ME.
THANOS HAS ALREADY BEEN GIFTED THE SECRET CODES TO ACCESS A LOST MEMORY THAT WOULD SCOUR THE WORLD, AS TOLD BY HIS HONORARY GRANDFATHER...
(SEE THE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS TAGGED: ETERNALS: THE HERETIC.)
...BUT HE STILL HAS BUSINESS TO ATTEND TO BEFORE PROCEEDING TO COMPLETE ANNIHILATION.
WHAT DRUIG SUGGESTS IS FAR MORE USEFUL...
PHASTOS. I WANTED TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING.
DRUIG, IF YOU WILL...

THIS IS THE TOWN OF *LITTLE HOLLOW.*
PEACEFUL. SAFE.

AND *THIS* WILL MAKE THE MACHINE CREATE A PLASMA VENT BENEATH IT.

TELL ME WHAT I WISH TO KNOW, OR I WILL RENDER TEN THOUSAND SOULS INTO CHARCOAL.

PHASTOS DOES THE MATH.
HE CALCULATES HOW MUCH TIME HE HAS ALREADY BOUGHT.
HE CALCULATES WHETHER HIM REVEALING A SMALL BUT KEY SECRET WILL SAVE THE TOWN.
HE CALCULATES WHETHER HE COULD BEAR THEIR DEATHS IF HE DIDN'T TRY.


HE COMES TO HIS CONCLUSION.
I REANIMATED YOU AND MADE YOU PART OF THE MACHINE IN THE FEW WAYS I COULD SEE... BUT FULL INTEGRATION? I NEVER HAD TIME TO DISCOVER HOW TO DO IT.
THOSE DETAILS ARE *YOUR PARENTS'* SECRET. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DID TO MAKE YOU.

THEN THIS IS ALL FOR NOTHING. MY CHANCE FOR A NEW FORM DIED ALONG WITH THEM.
WELL, YOU COULD JUST ASK THEM.
THEY'RE THREE CELLS OVER.
CRACK
THANOS IS A GENIUS. HIS ATTENTION HAS BEEN ON THE TASK AT HAND. HE THINKS OF HIS PARENTS AS ETERNALS OF TITAN. THEY WERE NOT. THEY WERE ETERNALS OF EARTH.
UNTIL THIS SECOND, HE HAD NO IDEA THAT HIS PARENTS WOULD HAVE RESURRECTED HERE...
...I'M SURE HE'LL TAKE IT WELL...
MOTHER.

I CONSIDERED PRESENTING SOME KIND OF VISUAL EFFECT TO SHOW YOU HOW AN ETERNAL MOVES FROM A MICRO SCALE TO A MACRO ONE.
OF COURSE, IN REALITY, IT WOULD BE ENTIRELY IMPERCEIVABLE TO YOUR HUMAN EYES.
SO THIS IS ARTISTIC LICENSE.
COOL! LOOK AT THIS PLACE...
THESE SHEETS ARE AMAZING.
FORGIVE US FOR THIS TRESPASS...
AJAK BELIEVES ALL THIS TO BE A TEST. THE CELESTIALS LOVE THE ETERNALS AND HAVE A PLAN FOR THEM. THEY SIMPLY NEED TO HAVE FAITH AND ENDURE THIS SUFFERING.
SHE COMES HERE HOPING SHE'LL FIND CONFIRMATION...
HER FELLOW PRIEST IS MORE CYNICAL.
THIS IS A CORPSE.
GOD ISN'T HERE ANYMORE.
WE MUST, FOR ALL OUR SAKES, HOPE YOU'RE WRONG, MAKKARI.
HMM...LEY LINES PICKING UP. I'VE GOT A LINGERING SHAPE OF A SOUL... WE SHOULD MOVE.
SPRITE, CLOAK US IN YOUR ILLUSIONARY ART...
OUR SILENT PILGRIMAGE BEGINS.
WE FACE SOME OF THE MOST PETRIFYING CREATURES IN EXISTENCE. FOR EXAMPLE--

THE AVENGERS

THOR: An "All-Father" class god-being in an adolescent stage.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: Surplus WWII-era weaponry held with nostalgic affection.

IRON MAN: Human technologist.

BLACK PANTHER: King with long-term holdings in the afterlife.

CAPTAIN MARVEL: Alien/human hybrid.

PHOENIX: An avatar of one of the primordial cosmic powers of life.

STARBRAND: Rival planetary defense system.

NAMOR: "Atlantean" "Mutant" "King."

The Eternals have known groups on Earth by a word akin to "Avengers" for as long as they've been on the planet. Like many Eternal words, this carries various different meanings.

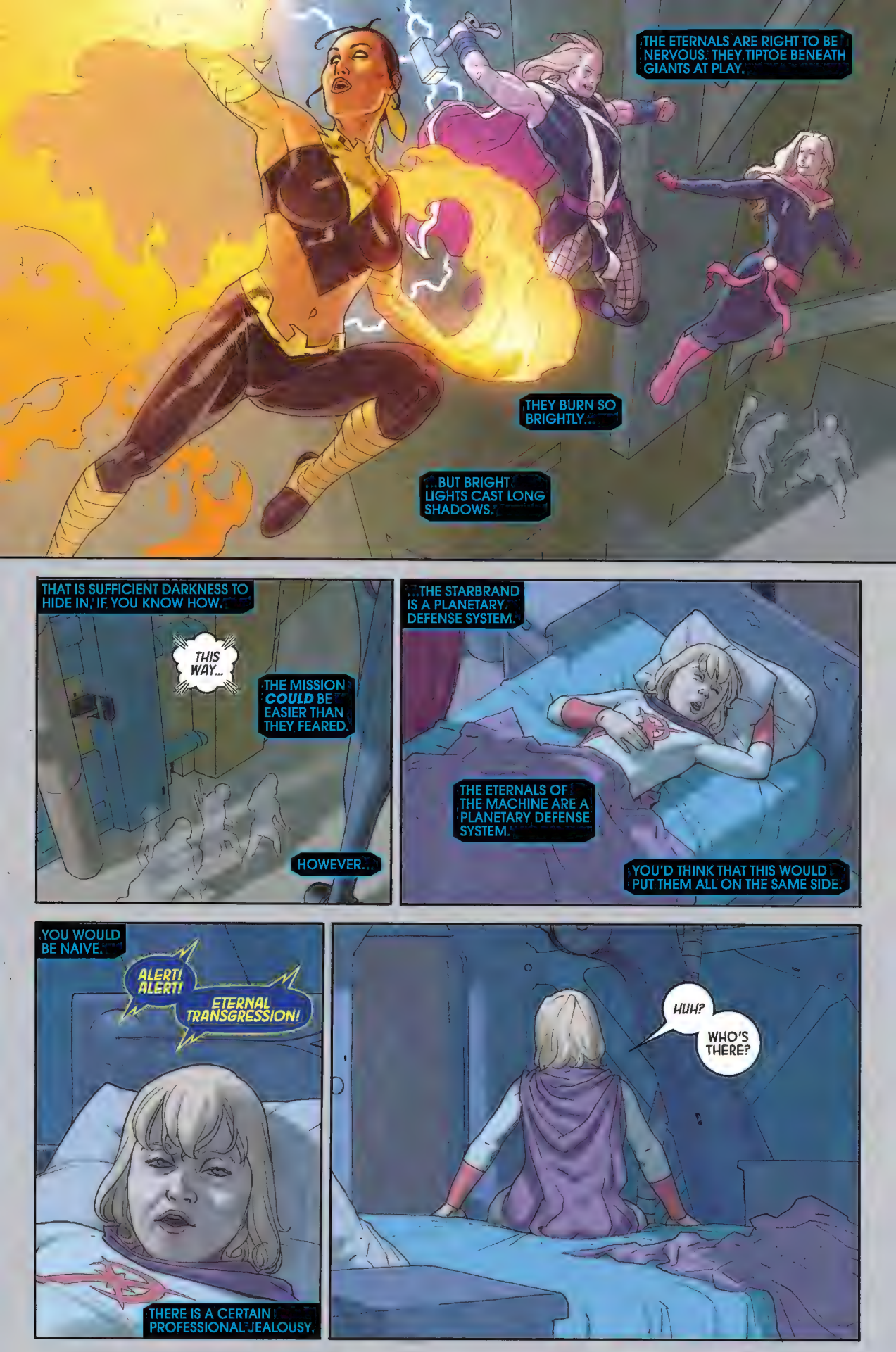
To humans, it means "Earth's Mightiest Heroes." It has a different connotation to the Eternals. It can be translated as "Those who share this world who are powerful enough to be a problem and organized enough to stand against us."

It also means, "Those who could perform acts of vengeance against us if there is a disagreement."

A million years ago, Ajak was sent to judge the first of these groups. She decided to spare them from annihilation. While this judgment has mostly held, there are times when Ajak questions her wisdom in this decision.

It would be a lot easier to sneak into here if she wasn't worried about being smashed by Thor's hammer, that's for sure.

EXCUSE ME, MY LORD...
...I HAVE A LITTLE NEWS...
IT'S THE THIRD TIME DRUIG HAS SAID THIS.
HE'S HAD TO RAISE HIS VOICE TO BE AUDIBLE OVER THE WET SOUNDS OF RENDING FLESH.
MY FATHER AND I WERE TALKING...BUT NOW WE'RE FINISHED.
WHAT IS IT?
YOUR MOTHER IS ALIVE AGAIN.
DO YOU WISH ME TO RETURN HER TO HER CELL, OR DO YOU WISH TO KILL HER FOR A SIXTH TIME?
IT IS THE LUCKY ETERNAL NUMBER...
OKAY, I WAS WRONG.
THANOS IS NOT TAKING THIS WELL AT ALL.


THE ETERNALS ARE RIGHT TO BE NERVOUS. THEY TIPTOE BENEATH GIANTS AT PLAY.
THEY BURN SO BRIGHTLY...
...BUT BRIGHT LIGHTS CAST LONG SHADOWS.
THAT IS SUFFICIENT DARKNESS TO HIDE IN, IF YOU KNOW HOW.
THIS WAY...
THE MISSION *COULD* BE EASIER THAN THEY FEARED.
HOWEVER...
...THE STARBRAND IS A PLANETARY DEFENSE SYSTEM.
THE ETERNALS OF THE MACHINE ARE A PLANETARY DEFENSE SYSTEM.
YOU'D THINK THAT THIS WOULD PUT THEM ALL ON THE SAME SIDE.
YOU WOULD BE NAIVE.
ALERT! ALERT! ETERNAL TRANSGRESSION!
THERE IS A CERTAIN PROFESSIONAL JEALOUSY.
HUH?
WHO'S THERE?

EXPERTLY DONE, MY LORD. AND AHEAD OF SCHEDULE!
YOUR FATHER WON'T REFORM FOR ANOTHER TEN MINUTES. YOU COULD HAVE A BRIEF REST-- OR PERHAPS YOU WISH TO ATTACK HIS HALF-FORMED SHELL?
I WISH THEM *DEAD.* I WISH THEM *GONE.*
HOW CAN I MAKE IT SO?
PHASTOS DISCOVERED THAT ONE CAN ONLY DELAY THE MACHINE ***TEMPORARILY.*** TO STOP AN ETERNAL RESURRECTING WOULD LEAD TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH.
AS LONG AS THERE IS AN EARTH, YOUR PARENTS WILL LIVE.
ETERNALS ARE A BLASPHEMOUS SPECIES.
THANOS' RAGE IS QUENCHED, LIKE A WHITE-HOT SWORD PUSHED INTO WATER.
THE FIRE IS GONE, LEAVING ONLY STEEL, AND A SIMPLE THOUGHT...
"AS IF I NEEDED ANOTHER REASON TO DESTROY THIS PITIFUL PLANET."
THE RACK. MY PARENTS.
I MUST INTRODUCE THEM TO ONE ANOTHER.

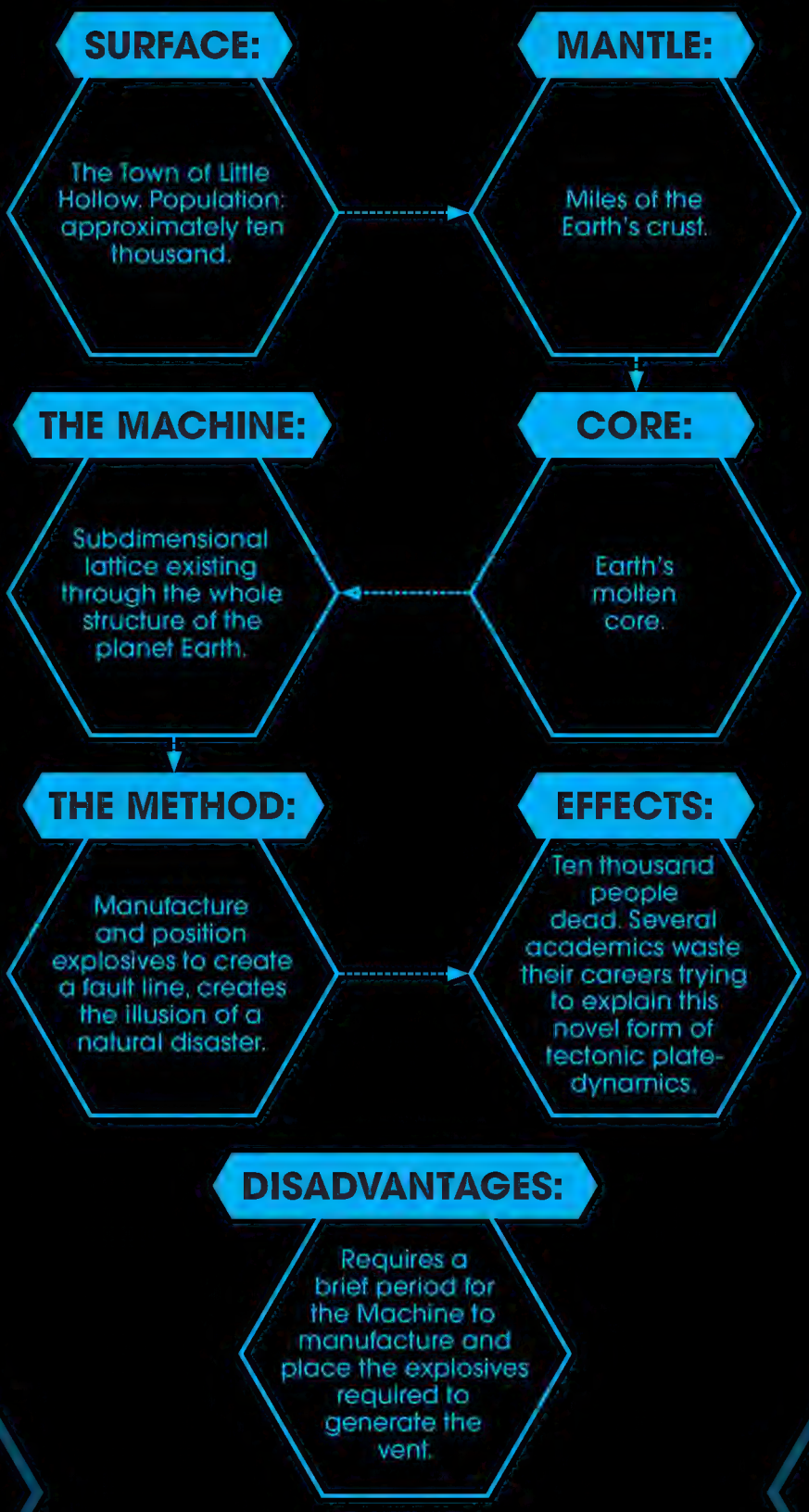
I'M GETTING SOME ALERTS.
I THINK OUR PASSAGE HAS BEEN DISCO--
HEY! YOU! FUNNY SHADOWS!
I CAN SEEEEE YOU! WHATCHA DOIN'?
BETWEEN SECONDS, THERE IS THE CALCULATION OF ANCIENT BEINGS.
THE FIRST TIME AJAK DIED WAS BY THE HANDS OF A STARBRAND, AND SHE HAS NO DESIRE TO REPEAT THE EXPERIENCE.
TO STRIKE FIRST WOULD BE WISEST. IT WOULD ALSO BE IMMORAL.
AJAK, KINGO AND MAKKARI ARE SKILLED IN TECHNIQUES FOR MANY CONFRONTATIONS...
...BUT HERE, SPRITE IS THE MASTER.
OH, YOU KNOW WHO I AM...
SHE SCANS THE SURFACE BRAIN OF THE CHILD...

...AND FINDS WHAT SHE NEEDS.
...I'M YOUR MAGICAL SLEEP FRIEND, POOBLE-PEEBS!
HEYA! HOW Y'DOIN'?!
YOU ARE THE MAGICAL SLEEP FRIEND, POOBLE-PEEBS!
I AM! AND I WOULD LOVE TO HANG!
WE HAVE TO BE QUIET THOUGH, RIGHT?
SURE! MY ROOM'S BACK HERE!
YOU GOT THIS?
SHUSH...
...AND I SWEAR, THIS WILL TURN OUT MUCH BETTER THAN THE LAST TIME I BABYSAT SOMEONE.

I DO NOT THINK PAIN WILL MAKE THEM TALK.
GNK!
AHH!
...BUT I HAVE THE RARE OPPORTUNITY TO HURT THOSE WHO CAUSED ALL MY PAIN...
I KNOW...
YOU ARE THE CAUSE OF ALL MINE.
UNTRUE, AND YOU KNOW IT. YOU AND FATHER ARE THE ARCHITECTS OF ALL YOUR MISERY.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT. I WANT YOU TO TELL ME HOW I CAN BE MADE ONE WITH THE MACHINE, AND I SEE I MUST PERSUADE YOU...
DRUIG, IF YOU WILL...

THIS IS THE TOWN OF LITTLE HOLLOW.
THIS LITTLE MACHINE WILL CREATE A PLASMA VENT BENEATH IT.
TELL ME HOW I WAS WROUGHT, OR TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE WILL DIE.
YES, YOU CAN MOVE ANYONE WITH ENOUGH LEVERAGE...
...BUT HATE IS A COUNTERWEIGHT THAT CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED.
BETTER THEY BURN THAN WE HELP YOU RENDER MORE WORLDS CINDER, CHILD.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE, THANOS.
BUT KNOW THIS: MY HATE FOR YOU IS UNCONDITIONAL.
KLLK

HOW TO MANUFACTURE A PLASMA VENT


SURFACE:
The Town of Little Hollow. Population: approximately ten thousand.
MANTLE:
Miles of the Earth's crust.
THE MACHINE:
Subdimensional lattice existing through the whole structure of the planet Earth.
CORE:
Earth's molten core.
THE METHOD:
Manufacture and position explosives to create a fault line, creates the illusion of a natural disaster.
EFFECTS:
Ten thousand people dead. Several academics waste their careers trying to explain this novel form of tectonic plate-dynamics.
DISADVANTAGES:
Requires a brief period for the Machine to manufacture and place the explosives required to generate the vent.

TRY SITTING, IKARIS. PACING DOESN'T HELP, AND FLOATING WON'T EITHER.
IT IS BEYOND BEARING. I WANT TO BE IN THERE. IT IS AGAINST MY NATURE TO WAIT WHEN THERE IS PERIL. I NEED TO DO SOM--
A PLASMA VENT IS IMMINENT BENEATH THE TOWN OF LITTLE HOLLOW.
HAVE A NICE DAY.
WERE THIS KINGO OR SPRITE, YOU'D HAVE A "YOU HAD TO GO AND JINX US, IKARIS!" JOKE.
BUT THIS IS THENA AND IKARIS.
THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT JOKES.
THEY CARE THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE.
BOOM
TO ALERT THEIR FRIENDS WOULD BREAK SECURITY AND RISK DETECTION.

...THEY LEAVE AND HOPE THAT THEIR FRIENDS WON'T NEED THEM.
HERE. THE LEY LINES CONGREGATE. IF IT WORKS ANYWHERE, IT'LL WORK HERE...
TO SPEAK TO THE CELESTIALS? IS THIS SOME KIND OF TRANSMITTER, OR...?
NO. NOTHING SO CRUDE. WE SPEAK TO WHAT REMAINS.
WE NEED SIX FOR THE RITUAL.
ER...I SEE A PROBLEM.
HOW FAST IS MAKKARI?
FAST ENOUGH TO BE IN SIX PLACES AT ONCE.
VZZZZ

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AJAK SPEAKS THE TONGUE OF HER GODS AS BEST SHE CAN.
NO ONE CAN DO BETTER THAN HER.
TO US, SHE WOULD SOUND LIKE A CHOIR OF ANGELS.
TO A CELESTIAL, SHE SOUNDS LIKE A YOKEL WITH A MOUTH FULL OF STRAW.
BUT A LESSER BEING THAN A CELESTIAL SPEAKING THEIR TONGUE IS LIKE THE PROVERBIAL SINGING DOG.
NO ONE CARES IF THE DOG IS GOOD OR NOT--THAT IT IS DOING SO IS SUFFICIENT.
THE GHOST OF A LONG-DEAD GOD COMES, CURIOUS, INTRIGUED, PERHAPS WILLING TO SHARE EVERYTHING IT KNOWS...

WARNING! THE AVENGERS' SECURITY SYSTEMS HAVE REGISTERED YOUR PRESENCE.
THEY WHO AVENGE WILL BE WITH YOU SHORTLY.
OOPS.
I'LL QUESTION THE GHOST OF THE SPACE GOD.
YOU BUY ME TIME.
ME VERSUS THE AVENGERS. IN...A TOWER BLOCK?
HMM...
...I ALWAYS *DID* WANT TO STAR IN A *DIE HARD* REMAKE.

AVENGERS MOUNTAIN, THE NORTH POLE.
THE ETERNALS' INFILTRATION OF AVENGERS MOUNTAIN TO COMMUNE WITH ONE OF THEIR DEAD GODS WAS GOING PERFECTLY.
ALERT! ALERT! INTRUDERS!
OH NO. I FORGOT ABOUT THE ALARMS. IT WASN'T GOING PERFECTLY!
IT WAS ALL GOING WRONG.
TO SOME ETERNAL INFILTRATORS, SUCH AS SPRITE, THEY HAVE NO CHANCE OF BEING DISCOVERED. THEY'VE ALREADY MADE FRIENDS.
PLAYTIME > ALARM TIME.
OTHERS MUST SHOW A LITTLE MORE WIT TO REMAIN UNDETECTED.
ALERT! ALERT!
HMM. IS THIS SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOU?
MAYBE?
CAN WE FINISH OUR DRINKS BEFORE HAVING A LOOK-SEE?
NAMOR SMILES, AND SERSI FIGURES TAKING DOWN ONE OF THE AVENGERS IS SUFFICIENT.
THENA AND IKARIS ARE THE RESERVES AND SHOULD BE JETTING IN TO RESCUE EVERYONE SHORTLY...

...BUT SERSI DOESN'T KNOW THAT DUE TO A DISASTER ELSEWHERE, THAT WON'T BE HAPPENING.
OUR HEROES ARE ON THEIR OWN, TRYING TO SECURE THE SECRETS OF THE DEVIANTS FROM THE GHOST OF THE DEAD CELESTIAL.
ARE--
--WE--
--THERE--
--YET?
OUR BELOVED GOD IS BEING... TRUCULENT.
THIS IS NOT AS EASY AS IT LOOKS, MAKKARI.
QUITE. AND DO REMEMBER...
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...IT LOOKS LIKE AJAK IS JUGGLING THE LINGUISTIC EQUIVALENT OF CHAINSAWS.
SHE NEEDS TIME...
...AND ONLY ONE PERSON STANDS BETWEEN THE EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES AND HER RITUAL...

I AM SKULLATHAR THE DESTRUCTORITE.
HE ISN'T.
I HAVE JOURNEYED ACROSS A TRILLION DIMENSIONS TO FACE YOU, AVENGERS OF EARTH.
HE HASN'T.
BEWARE! MY BLACK BLADES OF EBONY DESTRUCTION WILL ANNIHILATE ALL THEY TOUCH, UNTIL ALL THAT REMAINS IS A MURDERED SCREAM.
HE'S BLUFFING.
DO NOT TRIFLE WITH ME! I AM THE OBSIDIAN LIEGE OF THE MORT-O-VERSE!
ER... NO.
I AM THE OBSIDIAN LIEGE OF THE MORT-O-VERSE, PITIFUL PULSE-POSSESSORS.
KINGO TRIES NOT TO CORPSE. HE'S AN ACTOR IN A FIELD WHERE "TO CORPSE" TENDS TO LEAVE ACTUAL CORPSES.
HE TOO THINKS HE HAS SECONDS UNTIL IKARIS AND THENA ARRIVE...

...BUT THEY ARE ELSEWHERE. DISASTER, REMEMBER?
LITTLE HOLLOW, USA
IKARIS HAS ALL THE STANDARD POWERS OF THE ETERNALS.
FLIGHT. STRENGTH. TELEPATHY. MOLECULAR REORGANIZATION. ILLUSION PROJECTION.
BY NOW, YOU MAY REALIZE "GENIUS" IS NOT ONE OF THEM.
NAY!
THE HOUSES AREN'T STRONG ENOUGH. AND WE COULDN'T CARRY ALL OF THEM OUT OF RANGE INDIVIDUALLY ANYWAY...
BAH! STOP FLIRTING AROUND IT...
GILGAMESH'S VOICE CUTS THROUGH THE CHANNEL. IT'S NO SURPRISE. HUMANS IN PERIL? THE FORGOTTEN ARRIVE...
WHAT'S THE PLAN, THENA?
THEY HAVE NOT SEEN GILGAMESH SINCE HE DISCOVERED THE COST OF THEIR IMMORTALITY.
SHE'D ASK ABOUT HIS EMOTIONAL STATE, BUT SHE HAS MORE PRESSING MATTERS.
LIKE HER LACK OF A PLAN.
WE DO HAVE A PLAN, YES?
YOU MAY WONDER WHY OUR ETERNALS ARE SO STRESSED ABOUT THIS SLEEPY TOWN.
ALLOW ME TO SHOW YOU...
A MILE BENEATH THE SURFACE, THIS VENT HAS BEEN CREATED. SOON IT WILL REACH THE SURFACE.
PLASMA + POPULATED TOWN = SLIGHTLY COOLED PLASMA + DUST.
AND WHO'S TO BLAME?

WELL, YOU KNOW WHO.
WITHIN MINUTES, AMERICA'S POPULATION WILL BE REDUCED BY AN AMOUNT THEY'LL HAVE RECOVERED FROM BY TOMORROW MORNING.
WHAT A DISASTER. I'M SURE THERE'LL BE TEARS ON EVERYONE'S FACES, OH PRIME ETERNAL.
YOUR REPORTS WOULD BE BETTER WITHOUT THE FLOURISHES.
YOUR ATTEMPT TO PERFORM CALLOUSNESS DOES NOT IMPRESS. THERE IS NO WEIGHT TO YOU, DRUIG.
YOU ARE A DILETTANTE PONTIFICATING IN A SALON AND RELEASE NOTHING BUT EMPTY AIR.
THERE IS NO POETRY IN YOU AND YOUR ATTEMPTS TO PRETEND WE SHARE ANYTHING OFFENDS ME.
YES, LORD THANOS. I'LL REFRAIN.
I AM WHAT OTHERS WOULD CALL--
A BACKSTABBING SNAKE?
I PREFER "A PEOPLE PLEASER."
IF DESTROYING THIS TOWN FAILS TO CONVINCE FATHER AND MOTHER TO ASSIST ME, I WILL NEED ANOTHER ROUTE TO RETRIEVE MY SECRETS OF CREATION. I TRUST YOU HAVE ONE.
IF YOU DON'T, IT WOULDN'T BE A PEOPLE-PLEASING MOVE, AND I WOULD HAVE TO TURN TO WHAT PLEASES ME.
UNDERSTOOD, MY LORD.
IT WOULD BE SUCH A SHAME TO GET BLOOD ALL OVER THAT NICE GAUNTLET OF YOURS AGAIN.
THANOS SMILES TO HIMSELF.
DRUIG DOES NOT KNOW EXACTLY HOW MUCH BLOOD HE COULD SPILL WITH A TWITCH OF HIS GAUNTLETED HAND.
IT IS GOOD TO HAVE A SECRET OF HIS OWN...

THE LOST ARMORY OF URANOS

Uranos the Undying was lord of the Underworld (i.e., the most secret of secret places buried inside yours truly. I am so ticklish there, you wouldn't believe). At the climax of the Uranite Heresy, he claimed to have primed a self-destruct mechanism.

He claimed it would be activated whenever he died.

Some believed this was fakery, which proves that despite all the Eternals' long and awful experience, some people are perennial optimists. Still, they took Uranos to the Exclusion and left him there ever since.

There have been hundreds of thousands of years of searching for this fail-safe. None of the questing Eternals have succeeded. This stock of doomsday weapons was safely out of reach of dangerous hands.

Luckily, Uranos has not shared this key with anyone else.

UPDATE! When exploring the Exclusion, Thanos met Uranos, and Uranos gave him the access codes to the Armory.

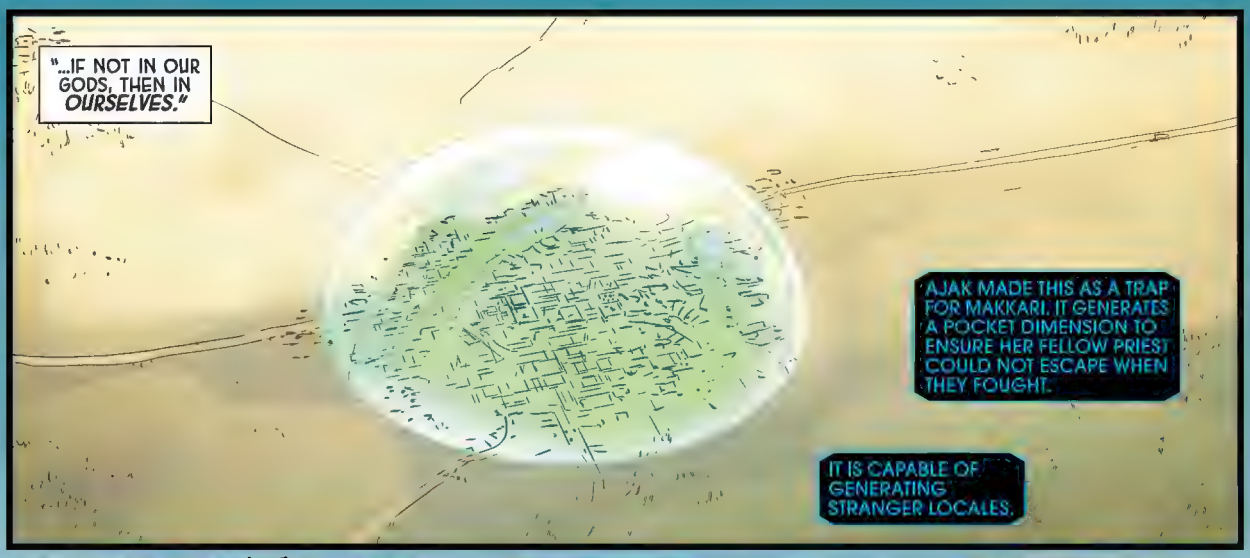
Thanos can now, at any time he chooses, enter the codes and the bomb will start ticking and soon after, I'll be gone. Which, considering how much it tickles, will be a relief.

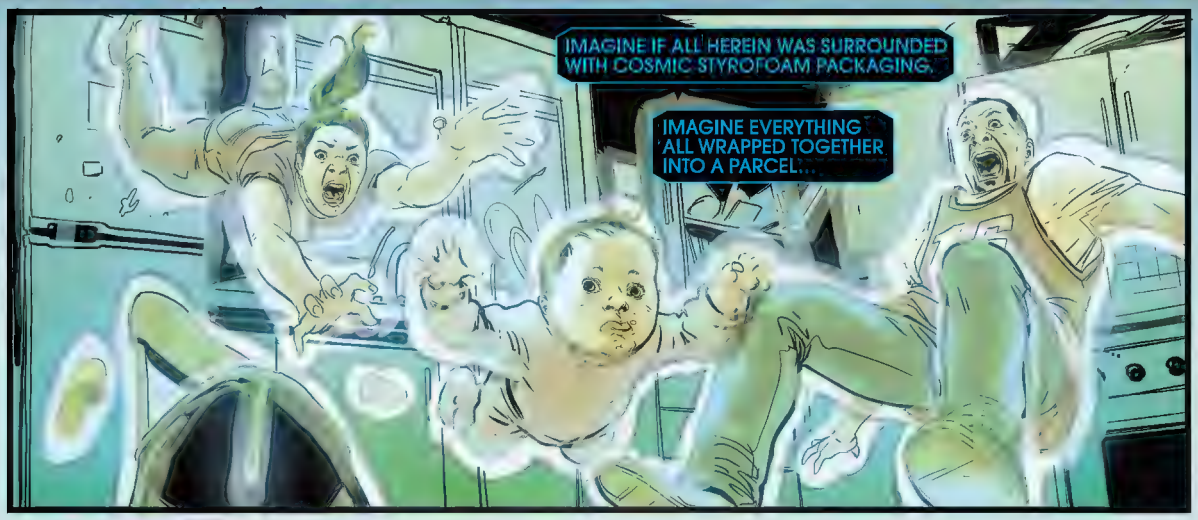
For more details, see the contemporary piece of journalism ETERNALS: THE HERETIC #1, by human reporters Kieron Gillen, Ryan Bodenheim and Edgar Salazar. In it, Uranos [redacted] and then Thanos said [redacted].

It was very heartwarming. At least, if you're a fan of genocidal monsters.

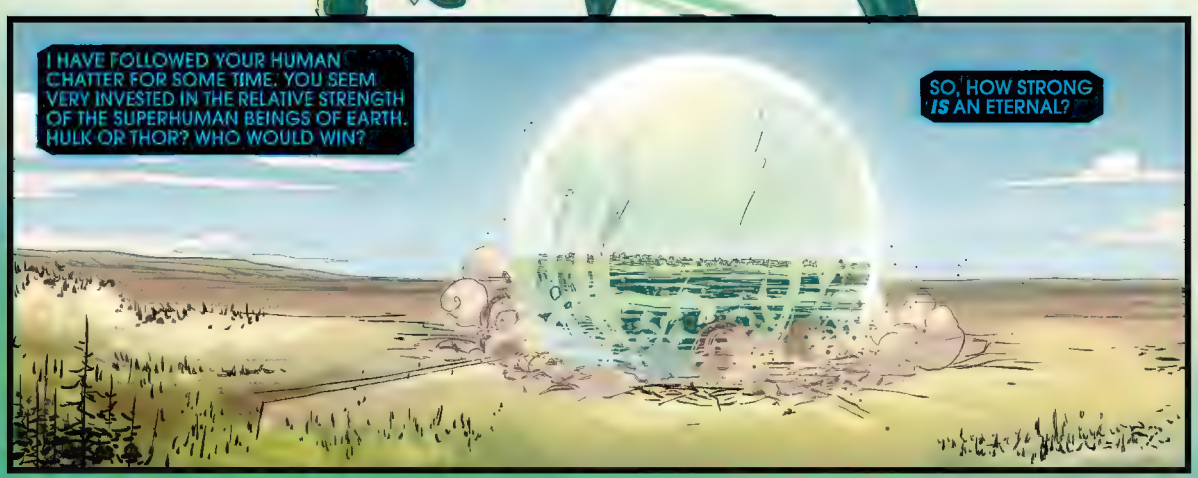
AJAK PERFORMS THE FOURTH CANTICLE OF GREETING TO THE GHOST. IT HAS GOTTEN A FAVORABLE RESPONSE SEVERAL TIMES ACROSS HER MILLION YEARS OF SERVICE.
THIS TIME, NOTHING.
BREACHING SECURITY PROTOCOL.
WHEN THENA DISTURBS HER, FOR A SECOND, SHE THINKS IT'S THE CELESTIAL. ALAS, IT'S NOT. ANOTHER REASON TO BE ANGRY...
SORRY, FRIENDS, BUT THIS IS NECESSARY...
WELL, AS YOU'VE BROKEN COVER, IT DOES ALLOW ME TO ASK--
--WHY ARE YOU NOT COMING TO OUR AID?
WE HAVE LESS THAN A MINUTE TO GET EVERYONE IN THIS TOWN OUT, OR THEY ALL DIE.
WE NEED SOME TECHNO-THEOLOGICAL AID.
IN MY ROOM IN CELESTIA, I HAVE A POCKET DIMENSION GENERATOR.
GET IT AND LEAVE ME BE...
THENA HASN'T EVEN BREATHED IN, AND IKARIS IS GONE.

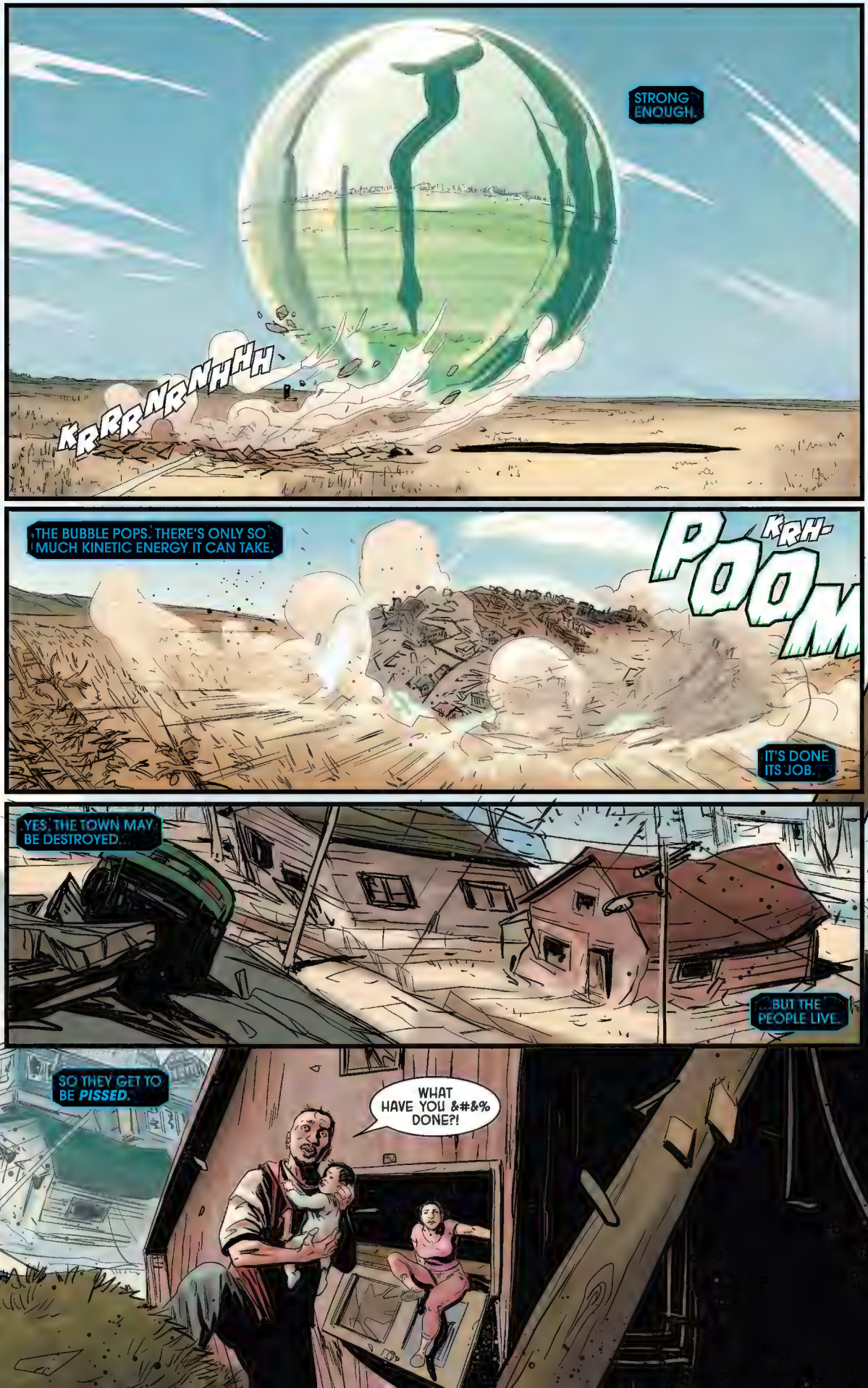
THE ARROW FLIES...
A DISTANT TARGET...
...IS STRUCK.
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
WE ARE DOING SOMETHING.
WE ARE HAVING FAITH...


"...IF NOT IN OUR GODS, THEN IN *OURSELVES.*"
AJAK MADE THIS AS A TRAP FOR MAKKARI. IT GENERATES A POCKET DIMENSION TO ENSURE HER FELLOW PRIEST COULD NOT ESCAPE WHEN THEY FOUGHT.
IT IS CAPABLE OF GENERATING STRANGER LOCALES.


IMAGINE IF ALL HEREIN WAS SURROUNDED WITH COSMIC STYROFOAM PACKAGING.
IMAGINE EVERYTHING ALL WRAPPED TOGETHER INTO A PARCEL...

...FOR A SWIFT DELIVERY.
TOGETHER! PUSH!


I HAVE FOLLOWED YOUR HUMAN CHATTER FOR SOME TIME. YOU SEEM VERY INVESTED IN THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE SUPERHUMAN BEINGS OF EARTH. HULK OR THOR? WHO WOULD WIN?
SO, HOW STRONG *IS* AN ETERNAL?


STRONG ENOUGH.
KRRRNRNHHH
THE BUBBLE POPS. THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH KINETIC ENERGY IT CAN TAKE.
KRH-
POOM
IT'S DONE ITS JOB.
YES, THE TOWN MAY BE DESTROYED...
...BUT THE PEOPLE LIVE.
SO THEY GET TO BE *PISSED.*
WHAT HAVE YOU &#&% DONE?!

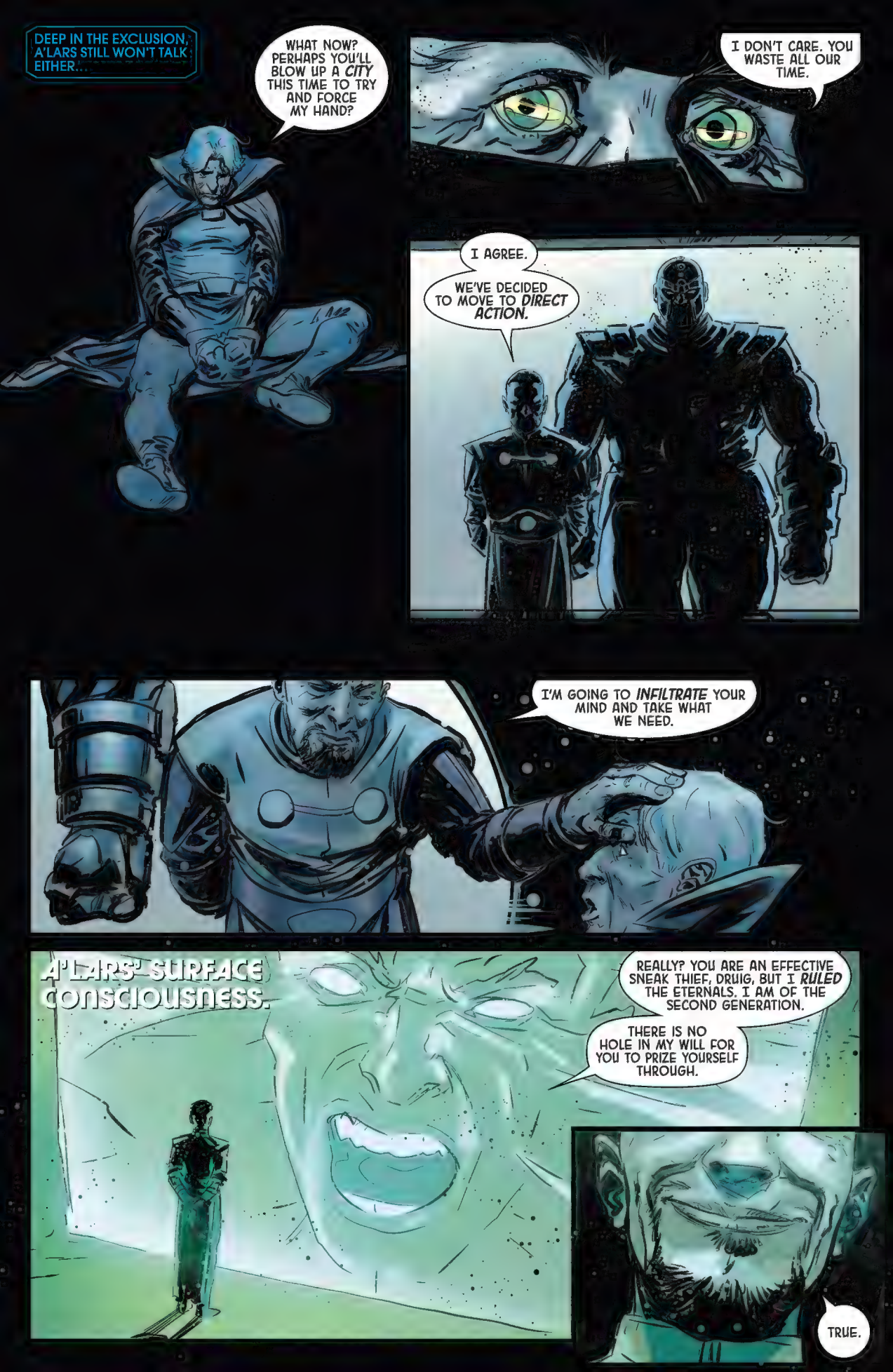
THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD DISSEMBLE AT THIS POINT, BUT ARROWS ONLY LIE IN THE QUIVER.
YOUR TOWN WAS TO BE DESTROYED IN A PLASMA VENT.
WE MOVED YOU FROM THE AREA OF ANNIHILATION.
MY CAR! LOOK AT IT!
DAMAGE WAS UNAVOIDABLE WHEN WE MOVED IT FROM THE AREA OF ANNIHILATION.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THAT.
WILL INSURANCE COVER THIS?
I DUNNO. IT MAY BE AN ACT OF GOD?
NO, IT IS NOT AN ACT OF GOD.
WE ARE NOT GODS.

STAND DOWN, DESTRUCTORITE.
BEFORE I REST MY HAMMER IN YOUR FACE.
HEY! STOP! MY--ER--EARLY DEATH WARNING SENSORS HAVE A MESSAGE! THE TOWN OF LITTLE HOLLOW IS TO BE CONSUMED BY FIRE!
AS A DESTRUCTORITE, I LAUGH! BUT ISN'T THIS THE SORT OF THING YOU PITIFUL, WEAK HEROES SHOULD BE DEALING WITH?
YOUR LIES ARE GROWING TIRESOME TO ME.
...CRAP. HE'S RIGHT. VENTING OF PLASMA...
THEN WE'D BETTER GO.
TAKE LEAD, CAROL. SOLVE THE PROBLEM, GET BACK.
WE CAN HANDLE THIS--AHEM--DESTRUCTORITE.
NO ONE CAN HANDLE THE OBSIDIAN DEATH BLADES!

KRAK!
WELL STRUCK. BUT THE EBONY REALM AWAITS YOU FOR THAT PERFIDY--
YOU TOOK THAT BLOW DELIBERATELY.
YOU DON'T WANT US TO RECOGNIZE YOUR FIGHTING STYLE.
BUT YOU'RE AN ETERNAL.
BLACK PANTHER IS A GENIUS.
THIS DID NOT TAKE A GENIUS TO WORK OUT.
WELL, GUESS I'VE GOT NO REASON NOT TO KICK YOUR ASSES NOW.
KINGO WAS MADE TO FIGHT AND KNOWS MARTIAL ARTS STYLES STRETCHING BACK TO THE FIRST TIME A CAVEMAN REALIZED THAT A JAGGED ROCK COULD CRACK OPEN THAT OTHER CAVEMAN'S FACE.
HE IS AS CAPABLE A COMBATANT AS EXISTS.
YES, HE CAN FIGHT BLACK PANTHER AND CAPTAIN AMERICA SIMULTANEOUSLY.
BUT HE CAN'T WIN.
KRK

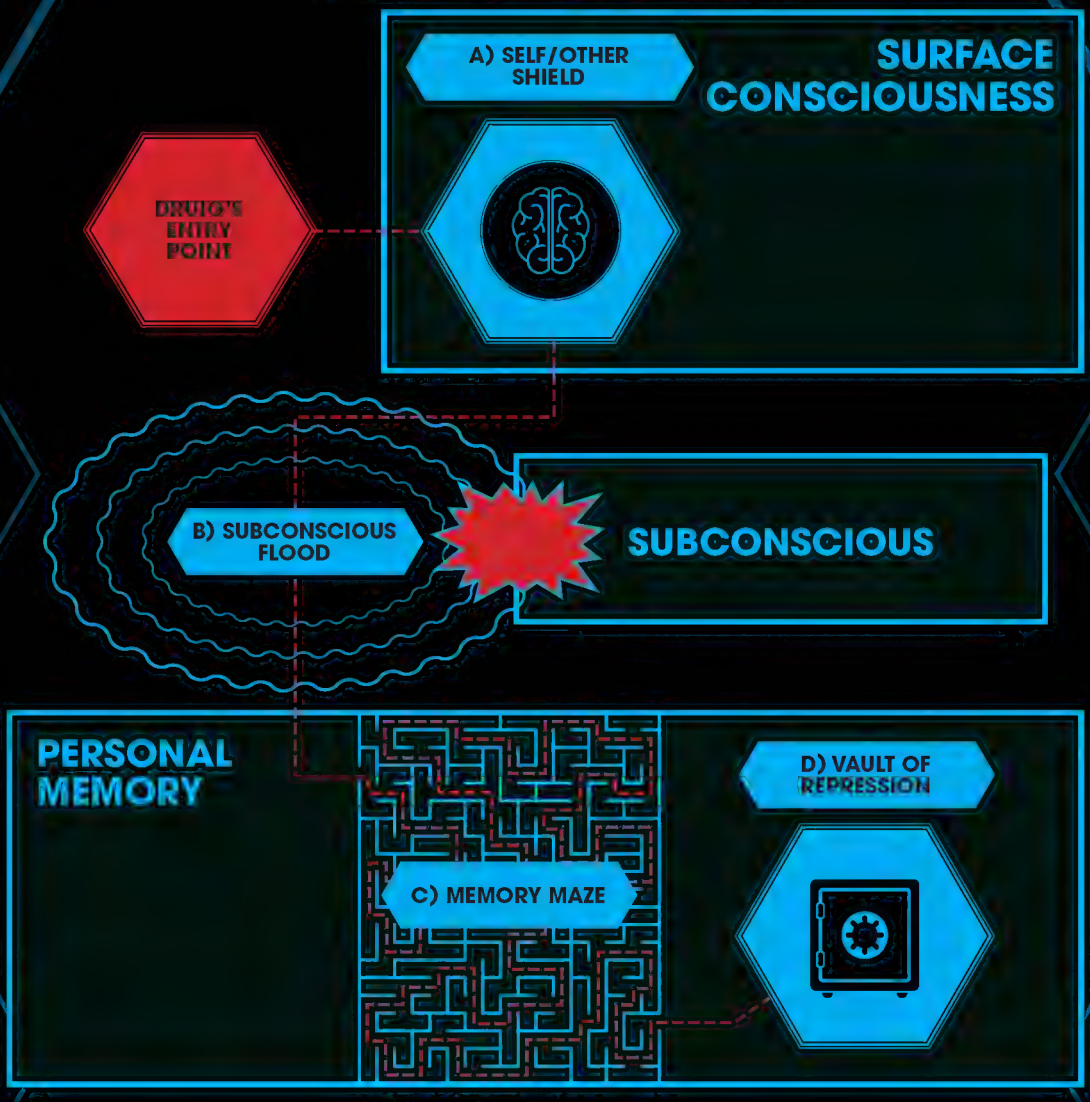
AJAK IS ALSO LOSING HER BATTLE. SHE BELIEVES ALL OF THIS IS A TEST FROM THE CELESTIALS... AND THE AVENGERS LIVING IN THE CORPSE OF THEIR GOD IS A BLASPHEMY THAT MUST BE AVENGED.
SHE SEEKS BOTH THE SECRETS OF THE DEVIANTS TO LET THEM ACTIVATE THE FAIL-SAFES PHASTOS HID IN THANOS... BUT ALSO CONFIRMATION FOR HER HOLY WAR.
HOWEVER...
HE WILL NOT SPEAK TO ME.
HE SPOKE TO *THE AVENGERS.*
HE SHUNS *US.*
HE IS DEAD, AND HE *STILL* WON'T SPEAK TO ME.
YOU *WILL* TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW, GHOST OF MY GOD.
LET ME PERSUADE YOU!

THE AVENGERS ARRIVE TO FIND LITTLE HOLLOW HAS BEEN SAVED, BUT A PLASMA VENT VENTING PLASMA REMAINS A PROBLEM DEMANDING A SOLUTION.
LUCKILY, THEY BRING ONE WITH THEM...
MY INNER FIRES ARE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE HEAT OF THE PHOENIX. MY WOUND HEALS.
THE AVENGERS SEEK AN EXPLANATION... AND FIND ONLY ETERNALS.
TALK FAST. TELL US WHAT'S GOING ON...
...OR WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE YOU IN FOR QUESTIONS.
COME ON. I KNOW YOU'RE SMART. TELL US.
WISDOM WOULD SUGGEST A DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE...
...BUT THENA IS AWARE THAT THEIR ROLE IS TO BE A DISTRACTION. WISDOM IS SILENT, AND LETS THE ARROW DO WHAT THE ARROW DOES.
YOU WANT US TO TALK, MAN OF IRON?
MAKE US.
IT IS A DAY FOR ETERNALS NOT SPEAKING...


DEEP IN THE EXCLUSION, A'LARS STILL WON'T TALK EITHER...
WHAT NOW? PERHAPS YOU'LL BLOW UP A *CITY* THIS TIME TO TRY AND FORCE MY HAND?
I DON'T CARE. YOU WASTE ALL OUR TIME.
I AGREE.
WE'VE DECIDED TO MOVE TO *DIRECT ACTION.*
I'M GOING TO *INFILTRATE* YOUR MIND AND TAKE WHAT WE NEED.
A'LARS' SURFACE CONSCIOUSNESS.
REALLY? YOU ARE AN EFFECTIVE SNEAK THIEF, DRUIG, BUT I *RULED* THE ETERNALS. I AM OF THE SECOND GENERATION.
THERE IS NO HOLE IN MY WILL FOR YOU TO PRIZE YOURSELF THROUGH.
TRUE.

BUT I'VE BROUGHT A FRIEND.
THANOS IS ONLY STARTING TO EXPLORE HIS ETERNAL NATURE. HE DOES NOT REALLY KNOW HOW TO USE HIS GIFTS.
BUT HE HAS A CAPABLE GUIDE.
...AND HIS GIFTS ARE SIGNIFICANT.
VOOM
HMM. I AM NOT UNFAMILIAR WITH THE ASTRAL PLANE...BUT THIS IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT.
AS IT IS WITH ALL THINGS OF THE TRUE ETERNALS, MY LORD AND COUSIN.
THIS JOURNEY WILL BE PERILOUS, OF COURSE...
...BUT IF WE GO DEEP ENOUGH INTO THE DUNGEON THAT IS YOUR FATHER, WE'LL FIND THE TRUTH OF YOUR CRAFTING.
WE JUST HAVE TO SURVIVE.

A'LARS' CONSCIOUSNESS DEFENSE PLANS



A) SELF/OTHER SHIELD: Brute force defenses constructed of pure will are normally sufficient to maintain the integrity of a psychic entity like A'Lars. Breached by Thanos' own will.

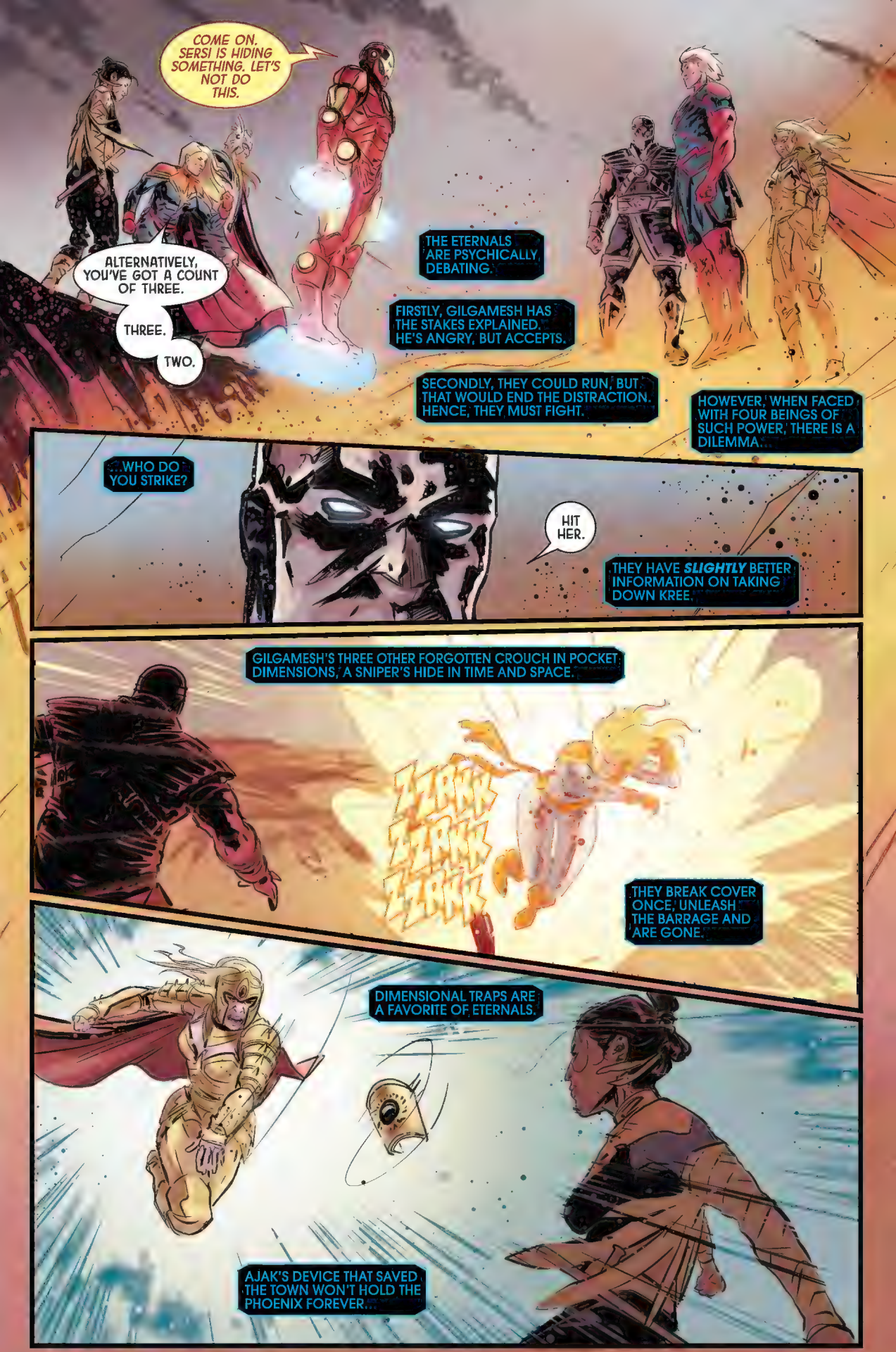
B) SUBCONSCIOUS FLOOD: The normal passage from Consciousness to Memory is disrupted by A'Lars destroying the integrity of his own subconscious. A'Lars' obsessions and personal demons will now both block and obscure the path to A'Lars' actual memories.

Legions of self-doubt and self-loathing will populate the region, repulsing intruders in a frenzy of self-flagellating rage. These will all naturally target one of their primary causes: Thanos himself.

C) MEMORY MAZE: A million-year life span gives sufficient data to obfuscate solely through quantity. With the time gained by the subconscious flooding, it will be arranged to slow progress and form construct-monsters of mistakes and regrets.

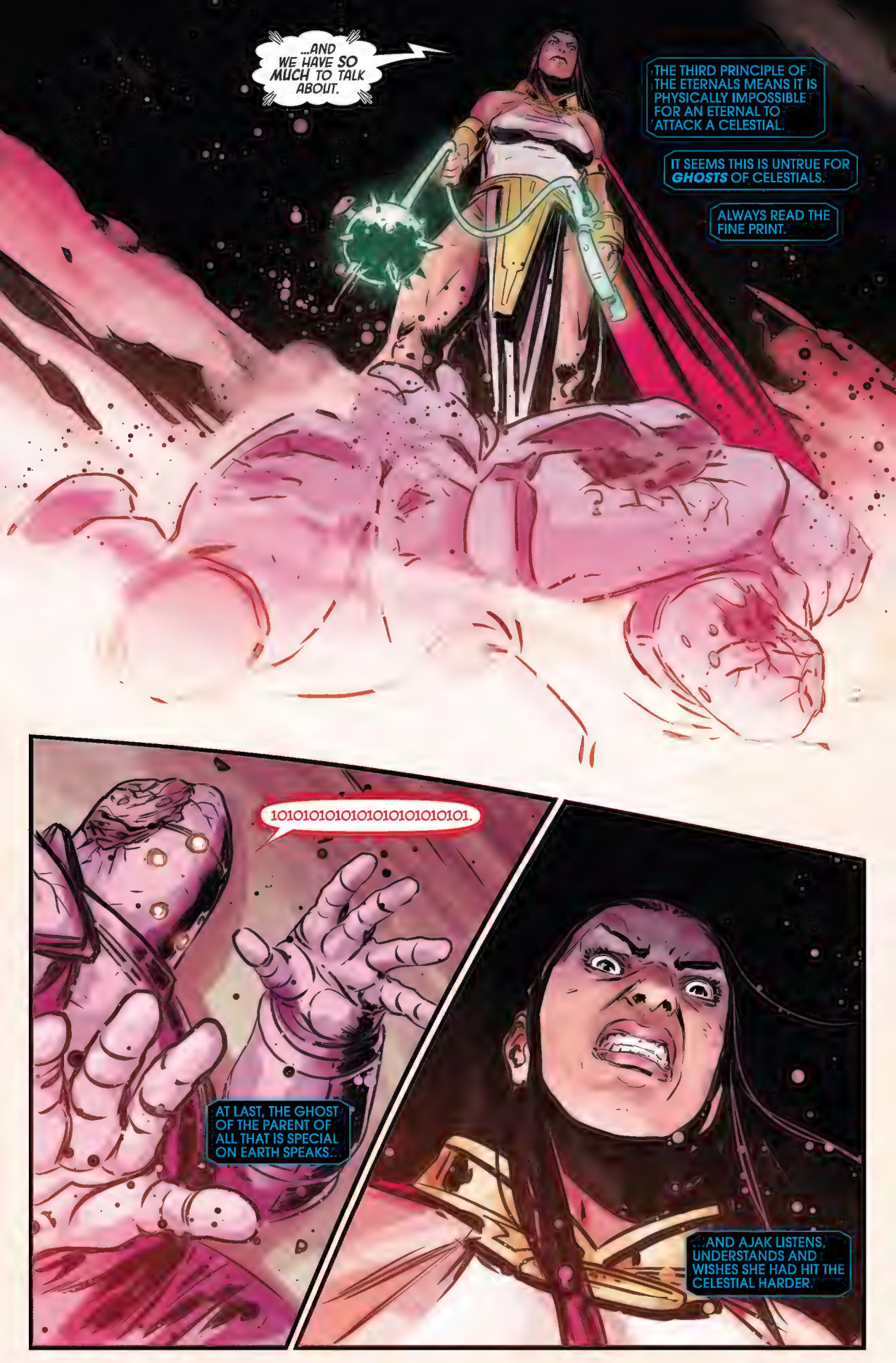
Traversing this dungeon will be made more difficult by traces of the flood lingering and forcing the invading parties to identify true memories from those invented by the out-of-control subconscious.

D) VAULT OF REPRESSION: The location of the relevant information--but also repressed memories, primed to cause psychic devastation if unleashed. Identifying the traps is a further challenge before the secret of how Thanos can be integrated with the Machine can be extracted.

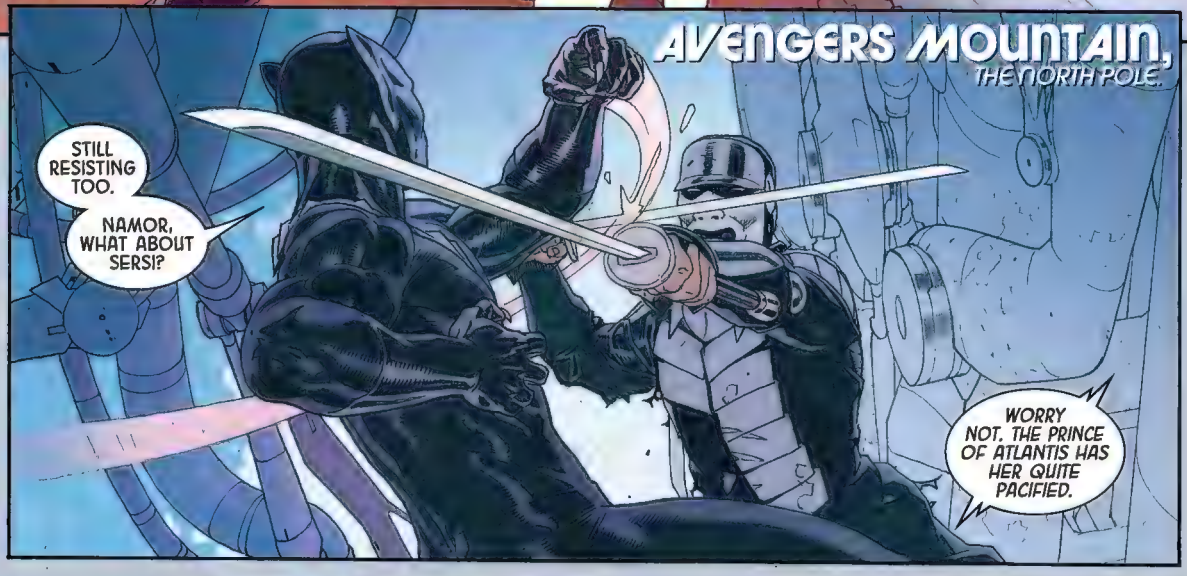

COME ON. SERSI IS HIDING SOMETHING. LET'S NOT DO THIS.
ALTERNATIVELY, YOU'VE GOT A COUNT OF THREE.
THREE.
TWO.
THE ETERNALS ARE PSYCHICALLY DEBATING.
FIRSTLY, GILGAMESH HAS THE STAKES EXPLAINED. HE'S ANGRY, BUT ACCEPTS.
SECONDLY, THEY COULD RUN, BUT THAT WOULD END THE DISTRACTION. HENCE, THEY MUST FIGHT.
HOWEVER, WHEN FACED WITH FOUR BEINGS OF SUCH POWER, THERE IS A DILEMMA...
...WHO DO YOU STRIKE?
HIT HER.
THEY HAVE *SLIGHTLY* BETTER INFORMATION ON TAKING DOWN KREE.
GILGAMESH'S THREE OTHER FORGOTTEN CROUCH IN POCKET DIMENSIONS, A SNIPER'S HIDE IN TIME AND SPACE.
ZZRKK ZZRKK ZZRKK
THEY BREAK COVER ONCE, UNLEASH THE BARRAGE AND ARE GONE.
DIMENSIONAL TRAPS ARE A FAVORITE OF ETERNALS.
AJAK'S DEVICE THAT SAVED THE TOWN WON'T HOLD THE PHOENIX FOREVER...

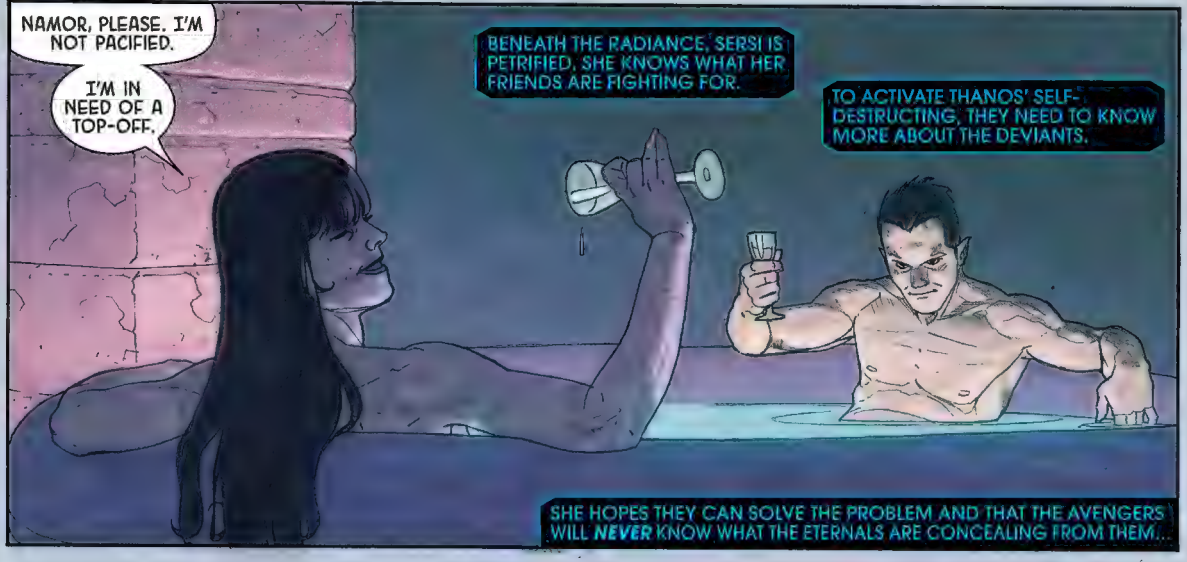
...BUT IT CERTAINLY EVENS THE ODDS FOR A WHILE.
NAY!
THOR AND THE PHOENIX ARE NOT FRIENDS. THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS STRAINED, AT BEST.
HOWEVER, SHE IS AN AVENGER...
...AND THOR *DOES* LIKE TO FIGHT.
YOU WILL BE AVENGED.
SHE'S SAFE. DON'T WORRY.
SHE MAY BE SAFE. *YOU* ARE NOT.
BEFORE WE START... YOU'RE NEARLY INDESTRUCTIBLE, RIGHT, IKARIS?
AYE.

GOOD.
AJAK--WE'RE DISTRACTING THE AVENGERS.
BUT THESE ARE...SIGNIFICANT BEINGS.
HOW MUCH TIME DO WE NEED?
LEAVE ME BE...
I AM COMMUNING WITH MY GOD...


...AND WE HAVE SO MUCH TO TALK ABOUT.
THE THIRD PRINCIPLE OF THE ETERNALS MEANS IT IS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR AN ETERNAL TO ATTACK A CELESTIAL.
IT SEEMS THIS IS UNTRUE FOR GHOSTS OF CELESTIALS.
ALWAYS READ THE FINE PRINT.
10101010101010101010101.
AT LAST, THE GHOST OF THE PARENT OF ALL THAT IS SPECIAL ON EARTH SPEAKS...
...AND AJAK LISTENS, UNDERSTANDS AND WISHES SHE HAD HIT THE CELESTIAL HARDER.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD SPARE A MOMENT TO HAVE SOME SYMPATHY FOR THE AVENGERS.
BOOM
THEY HAVE TO STRUGGLE WITH NOT UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS GOING ON AND WRESTLE WITH TONY STARK'S PRIMITIVE COMMUNICATION DEVICES.
CAROL TO AVENGERS MOUNTAIN: THE ETERNALS ARE STILL FIGHTING.
HOW'S THE INTRUDER?
BOOM
LITTLE HOLLOW, USA.

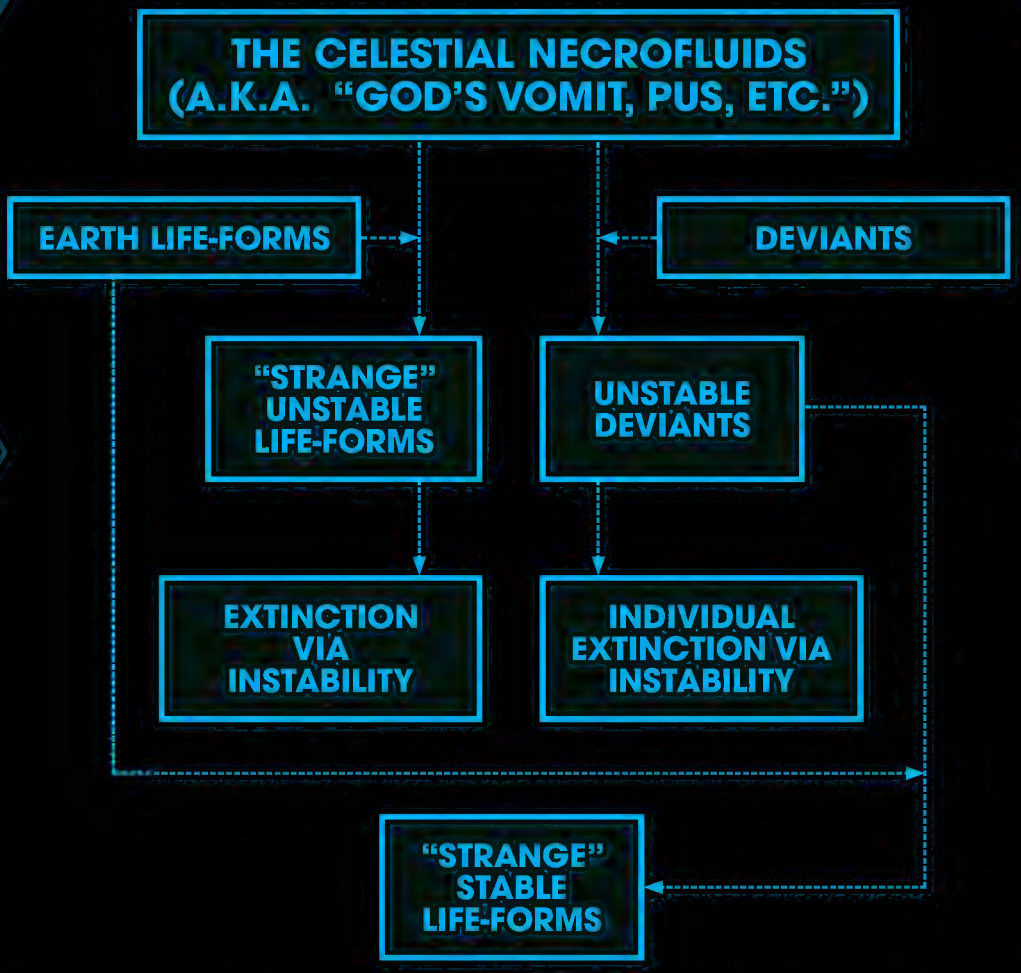

AVENGERS MOUNTAIN, THE NORTH POLE.
STILL RESISTING TOO.
NAMOR, WHAT ABOUT SERSI?
WORRY NOT. THE PRINCE OF ATLANTIS HAS HER QUITE PACIFIED.


NAMOR, PLEASE. I'M NOT PACIFIED.
I'M IN NEED OF A TOP-OFF.
BENEATH THE RADIANCE, SERSI IS PETRIFIED, SHE KNOWS WHAT HER FRIENDS ARE FIGHTING FOR.
TO ACTIVATE THANOS' SELF-DESTRUCTING, THEY NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE DEVIANTS.
SHE HOPES THEY CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEM AND THAT THE AVENGERS WILL NEVER KNOW WHAT THE ETERNALS ARE CONCEALING FROM THEM...

...SO SHE BELIEVES ALL RESTS ON AJAK'S QUESTIONING OF THE GHOST OF THE CELESTIAL THAT IS AVENGERS MOUNTAIN.
THIS WILL PROVE BOTH TRUE AND UNTRUE.
MAKKARI. YOU CAN STOP NOW.
I'VE BEATEN ENOUGH TRUTH FROM HIM.
WHAT
HAVE
YOU
LEARNED?
THE FULL SCHEMATIC-SCRIPTURES FOR THE DEVIANTS, THE DESIGN GOALS, *EVERYTHING*...
AND THAT THE DEVIANTS...
...*THEY* ARE THE IMPORTANT ONES.

DEVIANT OVERVIEW

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY AJAK, KEEPER OF THE <—.



A) Four billion years ago, the Progenitor died, with its necrofluids entering the ecosystem, changing whatever it touched.

B) The problem: The fluid was too noxious. This is why there have been **short-term** pockets of strange life-forms in the historical record, which always fall to extinction.

C) The Deviants are designed to be malleable to the fluid. Over the million years they've been on the planet, they have been acting upon the necrofluid, stabilizing it--or being destroyed by it.

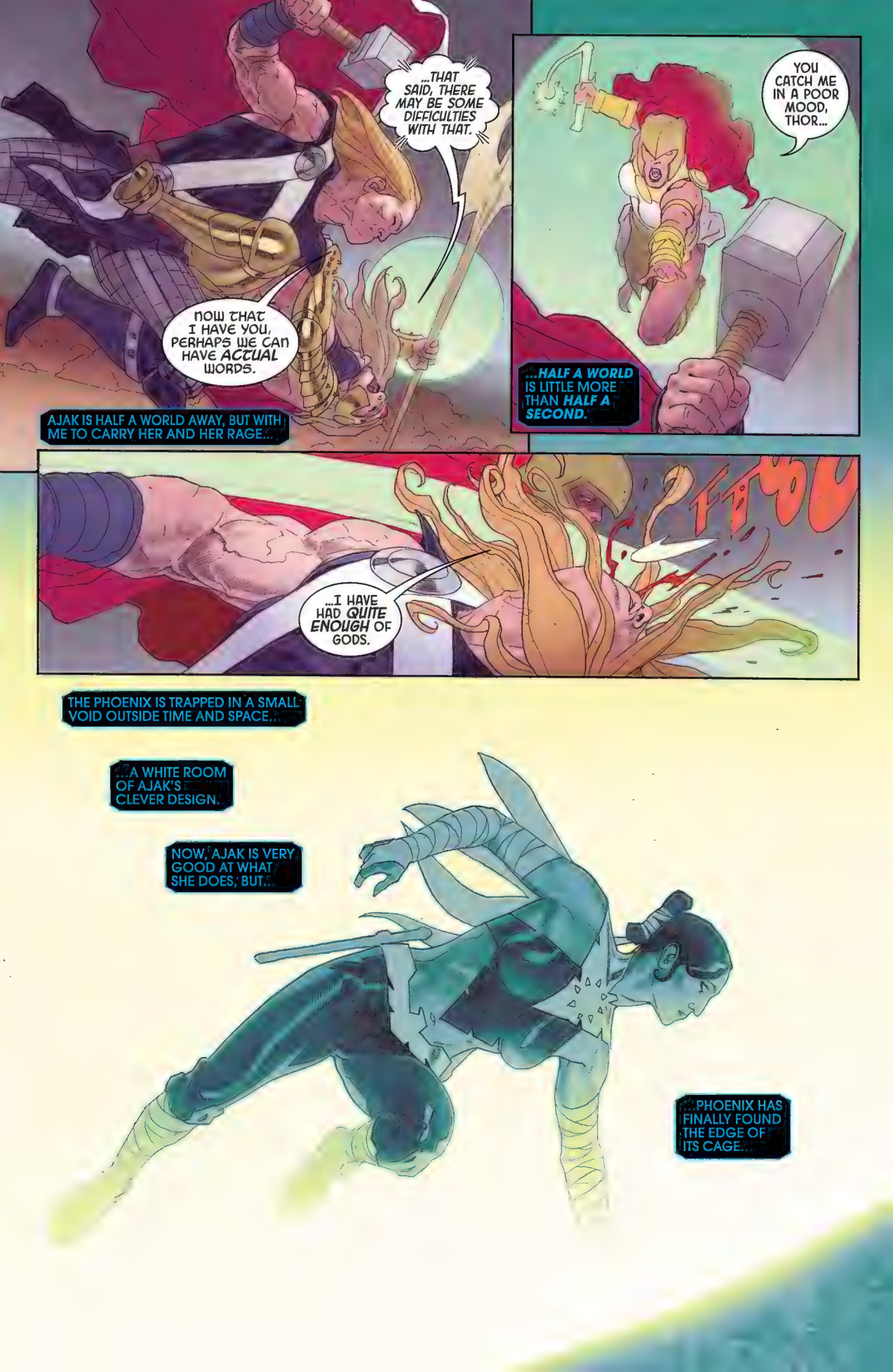
D) The stabilized lines of the strange are passed from the Deviants to the other biological beings on Earth. This process climaxed in the last few hundred years.

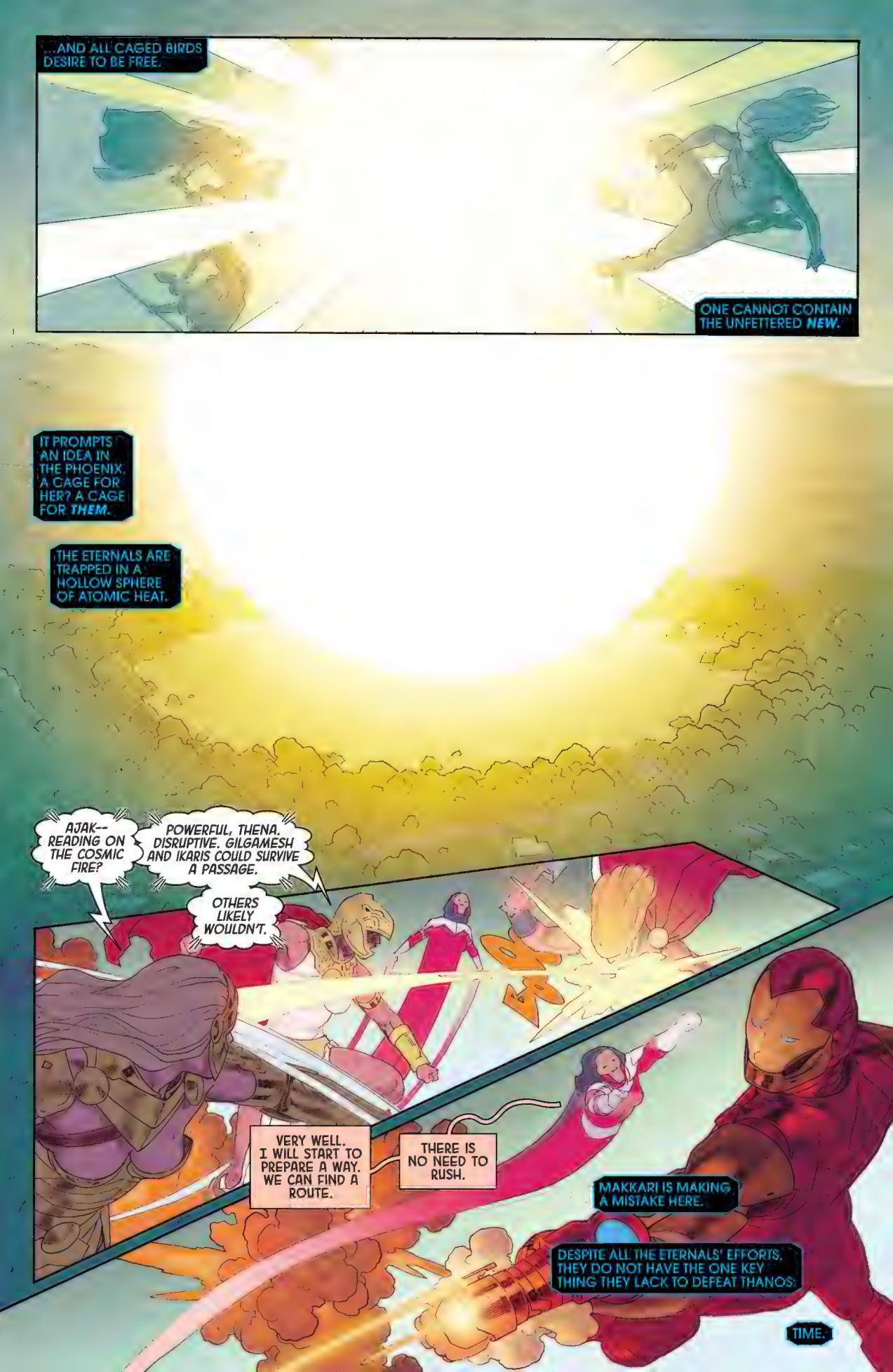
Conclusions: The Deviants change along with the warping necrofluid. However, the process can lead them to go out of control ("Excess Deviation") and so endanger the whole experiment. Eternals exist to ensure that the Changing People do not entirely destroy themselves.

Fundamentally: The Deviants are the mothers of the Age of Marvels. Like the Eternals, their purpose is complete--but all along, they were the important ones.

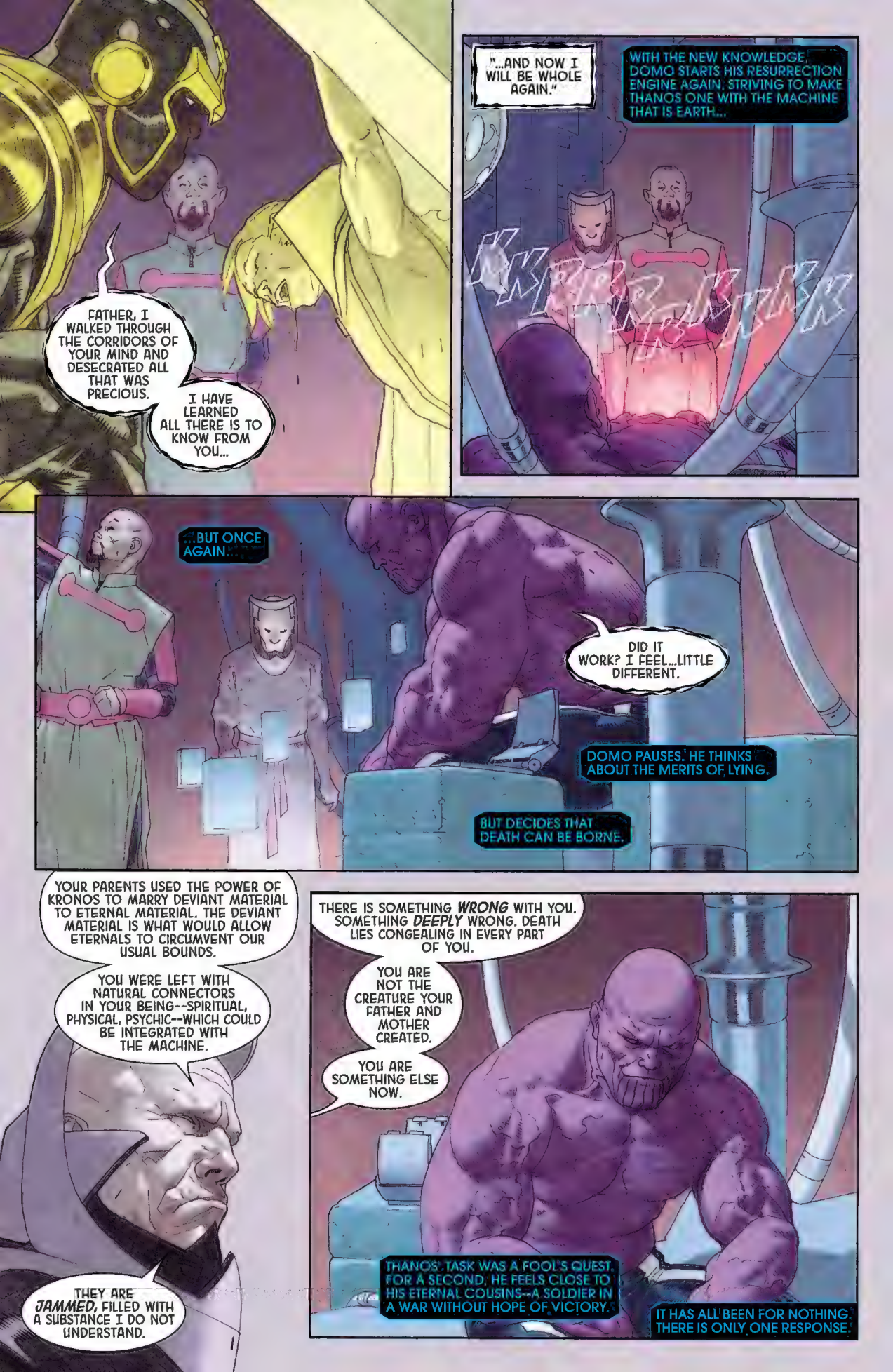
They were always the important ones.

I CAME HERE THINKING THE CELESTIALS WERE DISAPPOINTED IN US. THEY WANTED A HOLY WAR, SOME PROOF OF LOYALTY.
I CAME HOPING WE WOULD FIND EVIDENCE THAT WE SHOULD SLAUGHTER THESE HERETICAL AVENGERS...
I WAS WRONG. THIS IS ALL TRUE...AND THERE IS NO BLASPHEMY IN OUR FALSE CHURCH.
I SPENT A MILLION YEARS FOLLOWING A RELIGION THAT WAS NO SUCH THING. IT WAS A WAY TO BRAINWASH US TO DO THEIR DUTY.
MAKKARI'S SOOTHING TOUCH VIBRATES IN SOMETHING AKIN TO MORSE CODE.
IT IS HER AT HER MOST INTIMATE.
I CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE PAIN.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU THE MOST DEVOTED.
YES. I AM THE MOST DEVOTED AS THEY MADE ME THE MOST DEVOTED.
WE ARE ALL LIVING SCRIPTURE, BUT THE SCRIPTURE ITSELF IS BLASPHEMOUS.
HOW DARE A GOD MAKE US SO, MAKKARI?
HOW DARE A GOD?
AND A THOUGHT OCCURS TO HER:
WHO JUDGES THE GODS?
FOLLOWED BY A SECOND THOUGHT: SOMEONE SHOULD.
AJAK-- THIS IS THENA. UPDATE?
I HAVE EVERYTHING. WE CAN USE IT TO FIND PHASTOS' FAIL-SAFE.
I ALSO HAVE A RAGE THAT CAN SUNDER PLANETS.
...RIGHT. AT LEAST THAT MEANS WE CAN STOP FIGHTING THE AVENGERS AND ESCAPE...


...THAT SAID, THERE MAY BE SOME DIFFICULTIES WITH THAT.
NOW THAT I HAVE YOU, PERHAPS WE CAN HAVE ACTUAL WORDS.
AJAK IS HALF A WORLD AWAY, BUT WITH ME TO CARRY HER AND HER RAGE...
YOU CATCH ME IN A POOR MOOD, THOR...
...HALF A WORLD IS LITTLE MORE THAN HALF A SECOND.
...I HAVE HAD QUITE ENOUGH OF GODS.
THE PHOENIX IS TRAPPED IN A SMALL VOID OUTSIDE TIME AND SPACE...
...A WHITE ROOM OF AJAK'S CLEVER DESIGN.
NOW, AJAK IS VERY GOOD AT WHAT SHE DOES, BUT...
...PHOENIX HAS FINALLY FOUND THE EDGE OF ITS CAGE...


...AND ALL CAGED BIRDS DESIRE TO BE FREE.
ONE CANNOT CONTAIN THE UNFETTERED NEW.
IT PROMPTS AN IDEA IN THE PHOENIX. A CAGE FOR HER? A CAGE FOR THEM.
THE ETERNALS ARE TRAPPED IN A HOLLOW SPHERE OF ATOMIC HEAT.
AJAK-- READING ON THE COSMIC FIRE?
POWERFUL, THENA. DISRUPTIVE. GILGAMESH AND IKARIS COULD SURVIVE A PASSAGE.
OTHERS LIKELY WOULDN'T.
VERY WELL. I WILL START TO PREPARE A WAY. WE CAN FIND A ROUTE.
THERE IS NO NEED TO RUSH.
MAKKARI IS MAKING A MISTAKE HERE.
DESPITE ALL THE ETERNALS' EFFORTS, THEY DO NOT HAVE THE ONE KEY THING THEY LACK TO DEFEAT THANOS:
TIME.

DRUIG AND THANOS HAVE BEEN DELVING DEEPER INTO THE MIND OF A'LARS, SEEKING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MAD TITAN'S CREATION.
TOGETHER, DAPPER THIEF AND BARBARIAN-PHILOSOPHER, THEY CUT THROUGH ALL A'LARS DRAGS FROM HIS SUBCONSCIOUS TO THROW IN THEIR WAY...
THANOS THINKS OF WHAT HIS HONORARY GRANDFATHER, URANOS, TOLD HIM.
HOW URANOS HELD OUT ALONE AGAINST ALL HIS PEOPLE IN SUCH A PSYCHIC SIEGE.
THAT A'LARS CRUMBLES BEFORE BUT TWO?
ANOTHER REASON TO HOLD FATHER IN CONTEMPT.
YOUR DESIGN, LORD THANOS.
THIS IS HOW THEY MADE YOU.
THEN WE LEAVE.


FATHER, I WALKED THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF YOUR MIND AND DESECRATED ALL THAT WAS PRECIOUS.
I HAVE LEARNED ALL THERE IS TO KNOW FROM YOU...
"...AND NOW I WILL BE WHOLE AGAIN."
WITH THE NEW KNOWLEDGE, DOMO STARTS HIS RESURRECTION ENGINE AGAIN, STRIVING TO MAKE THANOS ONE WITH THE MACHINE THAT IS EARTH...
...BUT ONCE AGAIN...
DID IT WORK? I FEEL...LITTLE DIFFERENT.
DOMO PAUSES. HE THINKS ABOUT THE MERITS OF LYING.
BUT DECIDES THAT DEATH CAN BE BORNE.
YOUR PARENTS USED THE POWER OF KRONOS TO MARRY DEVIANT MATERIAL TO ETERNAL MATERIAL. THE DEVIANT MATERIAL IS WHAT WOULD ALLOW ETERNALS TO CIRCUMVENT OUR USUAL BOUNDS.
YOU WERE LEFT WITH NATURAL CONNECTORS IN YOUR BEING--SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL, PSYCHIC--WHICH COULD BE INTEGRATED WITH THE MACHINE.
THEY ARE *JAMMED*, FILLED WITH A SUBSTANCE I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.
THERE IS SOMETHING *WRONG* WITH YOU. SOMETHING *DEEPLY* WRONG. DEATH LIES CONGEALING IN EVERY PART OF YOU.
YOU ARE NOT THE CREATURE YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER CREATED.
YOU ARE SOMETHING ELSE NOW.
THANOS' TASK WAS A FOOL'S QUEST. FOR A SECOND, HE FEELS CLOSE TO HIS ETERNAL COUSINS--A SOLDIER IN A WAR WITHOUT HOPE OF VICTORY.
IT HAS ALL BEEN FOR NOTHING. THERE IS ONLY ONE RESPONSE.

HAH!
MY LORD... ARE YOU WELL?
I HAVE DONE WHAT NONE OF YOU ETERNALS COULD DO. SOMEHOW, I CHANGED MYSELF.
I CHANGED MYSELF SO MUCH THAT THE MACHINE NO LONGER RECOGNIZES ME...AND I DID IT WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING WHAT I WAS DOING.
EVEN IN DEFEAT, I PROVE MYSELF GREATER THAN ANY OF YOU.
THE IRONY IS BOTH SWEET AND BITTER, AND I FIND THAT MOST PLEASING...
LET US GO TO TITANOS AND ITS PORTALS. I WOULD RETURN TO THE TIMESTREAM. CALL THE OCEANIC WATCH. I LIKE THEM. YOU MAY JOIN ME TOO, LITTLE PET DRUIG.
KRK
IF THERE IS NOTHING MORE FOR ME HERE, I WILL FINISH MY BUSINESS.
I AM HONORED, MY LORD.
AND WHAT SPECIFIC BUSINESS IS THIS?
WHY, THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH.
MACHINE. HERE ARE THE CODES. OPEN URANOS' ARMORY.
ACTIVATE HIS DOOMSDAY FAIL-SAFE.
ACTIVATED.
OH &#%$.
DRUIG WONDERS IF THERE'S SOME CLEVER TRICKERY HE COULD HAVE DONE WITH THE MACHINE TO INTERCEPT THAT MESSAGE...BUT HE'D HAVE TO HAVE SET THAT TRAP A LONG TIME AGO.
IT'S FAR TOO LATE FOR THAT...

...BUT IT MAY NOT BE TOO LATE, FULL STOP. AN ALERT GOES TO THE ETERNALS.
THEY UNDERSTAND IT INSTANTLY. ALL THEIR EFFORTS? ALSO FOR NOTHING. TOO LATE FOR EVERYONE.
THEY HAVE TO RUSH TO TITANOS...BUT THEY ARE TRAPPED IN A MELEE.
EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES WILL DOOM THE WORLD WITHOUT KNOWING...
DESPERATE TIMES LEAD TO DESPERATE SOLUTIONS.
OH, BOTHER. I'M SORRY, NAMOR, BUT--
SERSI TO EVERYONE. STAND DOWN INSTANTLY.
LINK ME TELEPATHICALLY TO THE AVENGERS NEAR YOU.
HELLO. THIS IS SERSI.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS, BUT WE'VE MADE SOMETHING OF A MESS OF THINGS.
THANOS IS ON EARTH.
HE IS MINUTES AWAY FROM DESTROYING IT.
HE'S IN A PART OF THE PLANET QUITE INACCESSIBLE TO ALL OF YOU.
YOU HAVE TO LET US GO. ASSUMING WE WIN, I'LL COME BACK AND EXPLAIN EVERYTHING.
PLEASE.
AVENGERS... STAND DOWN. STAND DOWN NOW!
GODSPEED, SON.
PHOENIX'S SHIELD IS GONE.
GO. JUST GO.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE HELS HAVE YOU DONE?
I HAVE HAD VISIONS OF THANOS! MONSTROUS VISIONS! AND HE WAS HERE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
I'M SORR--
JUST GO!
THERE IS NOTHING ELSE TO SAY AND NO TIME TO SAY IT.

TITANOS.
WHAT'S THE PLAN?
THE LOST ARMORY OF URANOS IS OPENED...SO THE MACHINE FINALLY KNOWS WHERE IT IS.
THE PRIME ETERNAL HAS PRIORITY CONTROL OF IT...WHICH MEANS WE CAN OVERRIDE IT WHEN THANOS IS DEAD.
HOPEFULLY.
GOOD PLAN. KILL THANOS. SAVE THE WORLD.
I'M SENDING ALL OUR SCIENTISTS THE INFORMATION I'VE FOUND. PERHAPS THEY CAN FIND THE FAIL-SAFE QUICKLY AND WE WON'T HAVE TO EN--
HMPH. THINKING YOU CAN AVOID A FIGHT OR THAT YOU HAD TIME FOR SUCH BOOKISH APPROACHES...

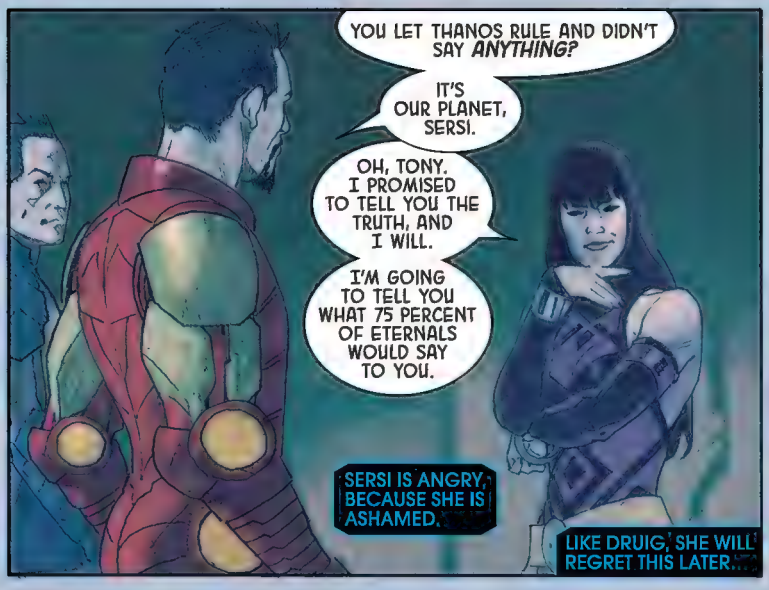
...YOU ETERNALS ARE ALL SUCH DISAPPOINTMENTS.
I AM GLAD I HAVE TRANSCENDED YOU.
FINAL COUNTDOWN TO ANNIHILATION: COMMENCING.
THAT'S MY BEST FORMAL VOICE, SO EVERYONE KNOWS IT'S SERIOUS.
THE ETERNALS TENSE. THEY HAVE A PLAN. THANOS DIES, AND DIES SWIFTLY. THEY GO TO WORK.
BOOM
THE OCEANIC WATCH ENGAGES, DEFENDING THEIR MURDEROUS KING.
OUR HEROES KNOW THE WATCH IS JUST A DISTRACTION. SEE, THEY HAVE A PLAN.
BUT REMEMBER THAT THING THE FAMOUS GENERAL SAID?

ALL PLANS FALL APART UPON CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY.
KRAK
ESPECIALLY IF THAT CONTACT IS A COSMIC HEADBUTT.
TERMINAL CASCADE BUILDING.
YOU ARE A DELIGHT, IKARIS. LEAVE NOW. CHASE ME FOREVER. WE CAN HAVE THIS DANCE TIME AND TIME OVER...
LET US BE ETERNAL ART.
NEVER. WE FOUND YOU. YOU WILL NEVER ESCAPE.
THAT DOES BEG A QUESTION...
BOFF
CRITICAL POINT IMMINENT...
HOW DID THE ETERNALS KNOW I WAS LEAVING VIA TITANOS, DRUIG?
DETONATION PRIMING...
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN A FOOTSTOOL FOR ALL TIME.
INSTEAD, YOU ARE MY LAST HANDS-ON MURDER ON EARTH.
CONGRATULATIONS, I SUPPOSE...
OH, YES.

I NEARLY FORGOT TO DO THIS.
KSSPLLT
WHAT?
I HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED SO THAT IF ANYTHING CLASSIFIED AS THE HIDDEN ARMORY OF URANOS WAS EVER ACCESSED, I WOULD ACTIVATE PHASTOS' FAIL-SAFE CODES WHEN THE COUNTDOWN REACHED A CERTAIN DRAMATIC POINT.
WHAT...? WHO DID THIS?
WHO DARES DO THIS TO THANOS?!
THE ORDER HAS A NOTE ATTACHED.
"IF YOU ARE HEARING THIS, IT IS BECAUSE YOU WIPED MY MIND, PRESUMABLY TO MAKE ME FORGET HOW TO USE THE FAIL-SAFE.
"SO I LEFT THIS LITTLE SURPRISE, TO ACTIVATE IN CASE YOU TRIGGERED A WORLD-ENDING EVENT.
"MY FONDEST REGARDS...
"DRUIG."
MPPHHH-FHHHHHH!
HAH. WELL DONE, ME!
NOW, I COULD GLOAT, THANOS, BUT WHY GILD THE LILY?
MKKHH!

DO COME PLAY AGAIN, MY BUMPKIN COUSIN.
MAYBE BY THEN, YOU'LL HAVE UPPED YOUR GAME.
THANOS' LAST THOUGHT BEFORE HE IS KICKED INTO THE TIMESTREAM IS "DRUIG WILL REGRET THAT."
DRUIG ALSO THINKS, "I SUSPECT I'LL REGRET THAT."
BUT SOMETIMES A SNAKE NEEDS TO LET ITS VENOM OUT.
DRUIG IS A LICKSPITTLE... BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER—
—VENOM IS A HIGHLY SPECIALIZED FORM OF SALIVA.
SO...WITH THE PRIME ETERNAL GONE... WE CAN DEACTIVATE THE ARMORY WITH A SIMPLE OVERRIDE?
AFFIRMATIVE.
DO SO. AND LET EVERYONE KNOW DRUIG HAS SAVED THEM ALL!
YOU MAY ALL APPLAUD WHENEVER YOU WISH!
THEY DON'T. BUT DRUIG SMILES, KNOWING OTHERS WILL...

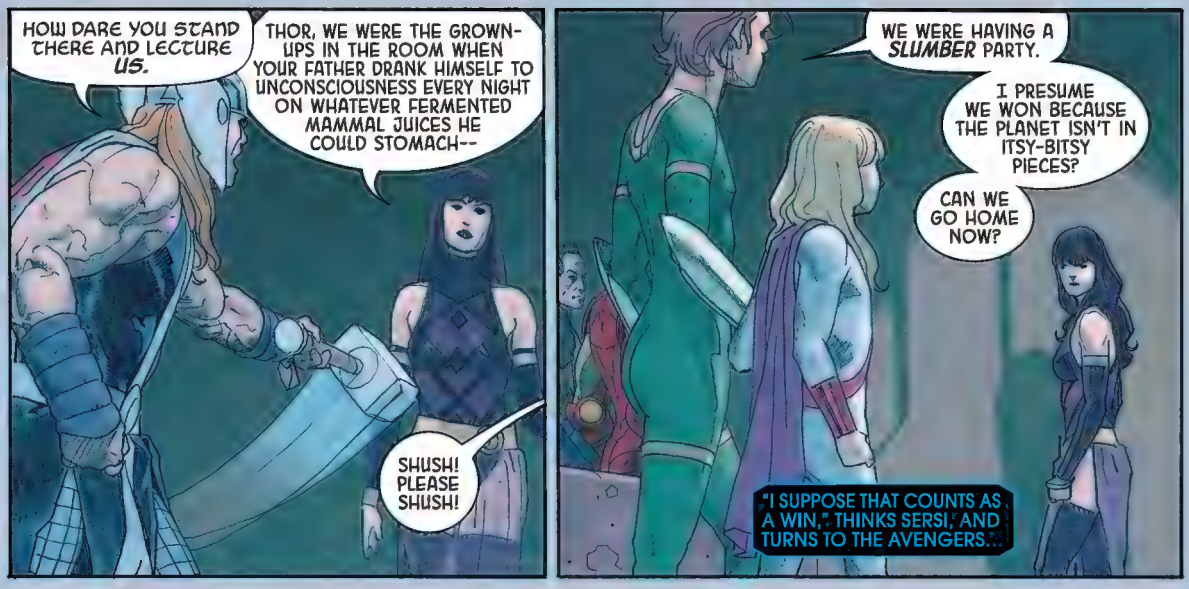
ADMITTEDLY, THE AVENGERS WON'T BE AMONG THEM.
SERSI HAS TOLD THEM MOST OF THE TRUTH, WITH ALL THE ENTHUSIASM OF AN AMATEUR.
OR, AT LEAST, MOST OF IT...
...AND THAT'S THE END OF IT.


YOU LET THANOS RULE AND DIDN'T SAY *ANYTHING?*
IT'S OUR PLANET, SERSI.
OH, TONY. I PROMISED TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, AND I WILL.
I'M GOING TO TELL YOU WHAT 75 PERCENT OF ETERNALS WOULD SAY TO YOU.
SERSI IS ANGRY, BECAUSE SHE IS ASHAMED.
LIKE DRUIG, SHE WILL REGRET THIS LATER...

...BUT SHE SAYS IT NOW.
YOU STAND THERE, WITH A FEW DECADES OF LIFE LEFT, AND TELL ME IT'S "YOUR PLANET." HOW CAN WE *NOT* PATRONIZE YOU?
IT'S *OUR* PLANET. IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN AND ALWAYS WILL BE.
WE ARE A GOOD LANDLORD, BROADLY SPEAKING...

...BUT DON'T YOU *DARE* JUDGE THE THINGS WE DO TO KEEP YOU IN THE MEANS YOU HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO.

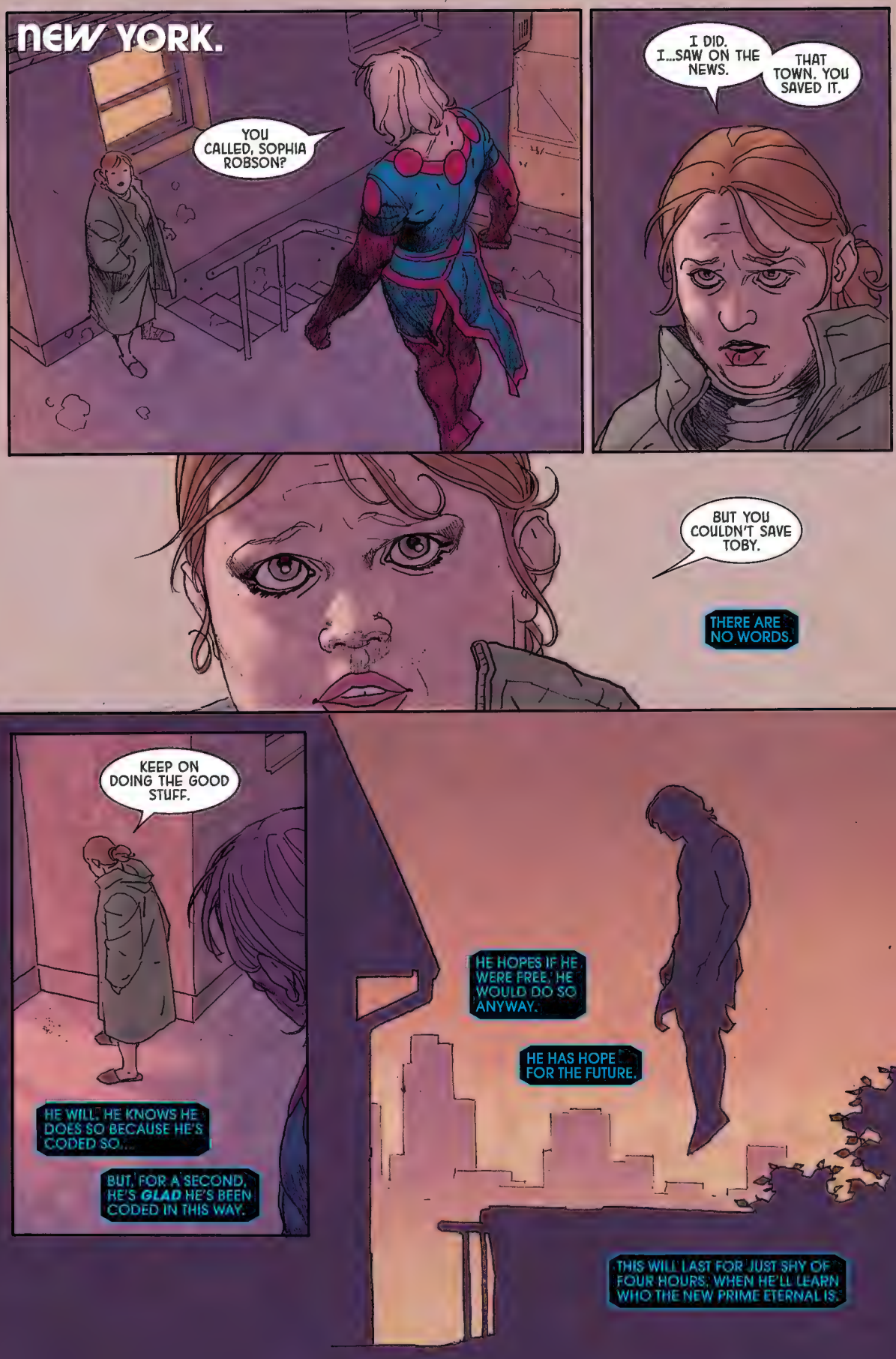
THAT'S WHAT THEY'D SAY. I EVEN HAVE A FEW SYMPATHIES. BUT I TELL YOU, SO YOU KNOW...
...YOU SHOULDN'T TRUST THE ETERNALS, AVENGERS.
WE'VE ENDURED. THAT'S TERRIBLY SUSPICIOUS.


HOW DARE YOU STAND THERE AND LECTURE US.
THOR, WE WERE THE GROWN-UPS IN THE ROOM WHEN YOUR FATHER DRANK HIMSELF TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS EVERY NIGHT ON WHATEVER FERMENTED MAMMAL JUICES HE COULD STOMACH--
SHUSH! PLEASE SHUSH!
WE WERE HAVING A SLUMBER PARTY.
I PRESUME WE WON BECAUSE THE PLANET ISN'T IN ITSY-BITSY PIECES?
CAN WE GO HOME NOW?
"I SUPPOSE THAT COUNTS AS A WIN," THINKS SERSI, AND TURNS TO THE AVENGERS...

...AND THEY TELL HER TO GO HOME, IN FAR LESS POLITE TERMS, SOME OF WHICH SHE WAS SURPRISED THAT CAPTAIN AMERICA EVEN KNEW.

I TOLD YOU SHE WAS UP TO SOMETHING.
AND I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T CARE.

CELESTIA.
I STILL THINK WE WON.
IF THANOS LOST, WE WIN.
THAT'S HOW IT WORKS, RIGHT?
IT IS NOT A WIN, SPRITE. WE HAVE SACRIFICED A LOT TODAY.
THIS WILL NOT END WELL.
PERHAPS IT WILL. WE HAVE THE DEVIANTS' DESIGN-SCRIPTURE. WE KNOW WHY THEY CHANGE. MAYBE WE CAN EVEN MAKE A TREATMENT FOR THEM.
WE MUST BE REALISTIC. THIS IS A STEP.
STEPS! A STEP IS NOTHING.
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY STEPS SISYPHUS TAKES.
PHASTOS IS STILL IN THE EXCLUSION. GILGAMESH DISAPPEARED THE SECOND OUR BACKS WERE TURNED. DRUIG...OH, WHAT TO SAY ABOUT DRUIG?
THIS IS--
ONE MOMENT. SOMEONE'S ATTENTION IS NOT WITH US.
IKARIS. WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FUTURE OF OUR GOD-ABANDONED PEOPLE?
I AM NEEDED ELSEWHERE.


NEW YORK.
YOU CALLED, SOPHIA ROBSON?
I DID. I...SAW ON THE NEWS.
THAT TOWN. YOU SAVED IT.
BUT YOU COULDN'T SAVE TOBY.
THERE ARE NO WORDS.
KEEP ON DOING THE GOOD STUFF.
HE WILL. HE KNOWS HE DOES SO BECAUSE HE'S CODED SO...
BUT, FOR A SECOND, HE'S GLAD HE'S BEEN CODED IN THIS WAY.
HE HOPES IF HE WERE FREE, HE WOULD DO SO ANYWAY.
HE HAS HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.
THIS WILL LAST FOR JUST SHY OF FOUR HOURS, WHEN HE'LL LEARN WHO THE NEW PRIME ETERNAL IS.

MANIFESTO FOR A NEW MACHINE ORDER

1) Who just saved the planet?

2) Who managed to secure the location of Uranos' Lost Armory, finally finding the last unexploded bomb of that ancient conflict?

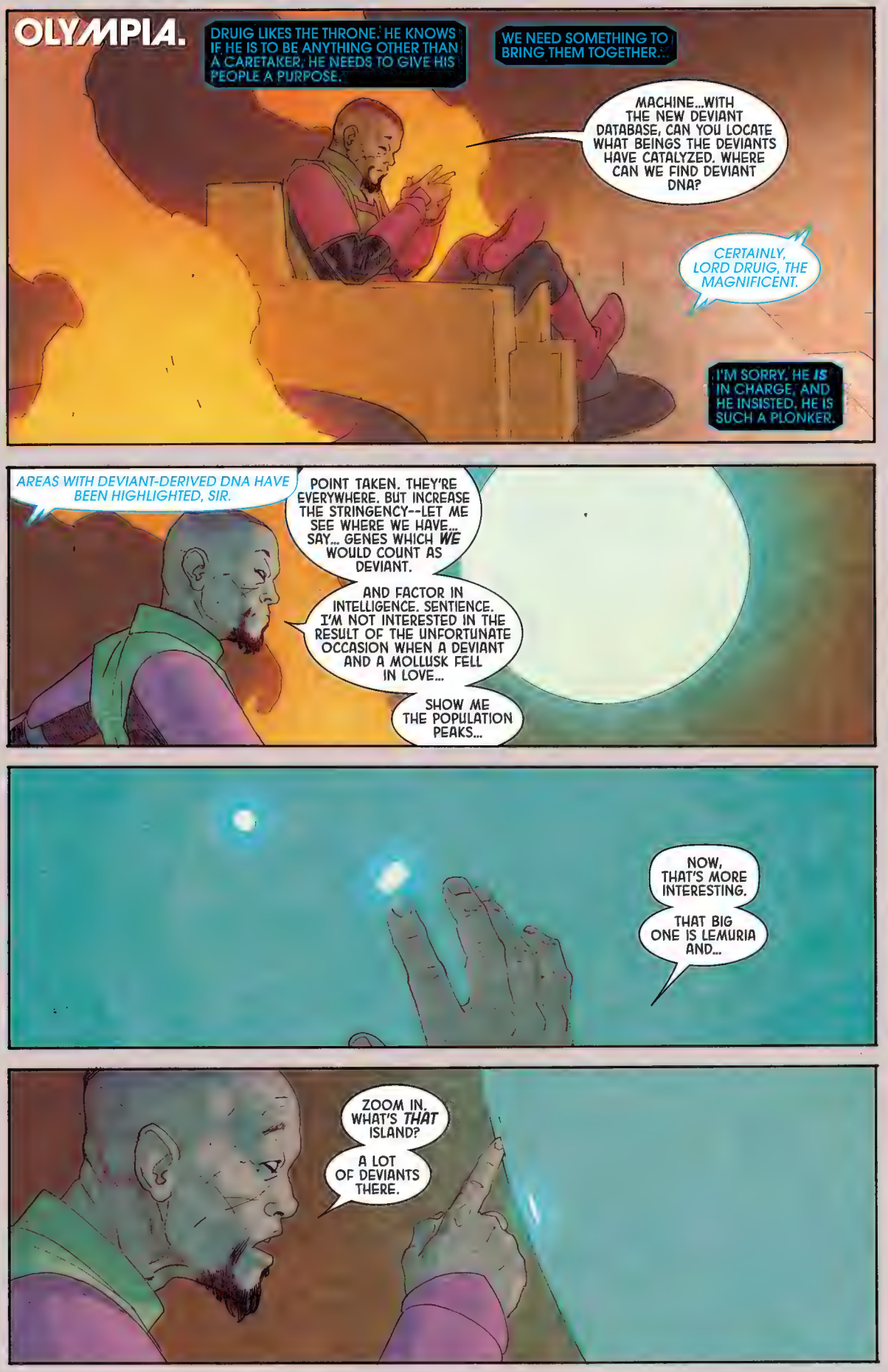
3) Who is only putting themselves forward as a compromise candidate and can be easily overpowered if he ever goes too far?

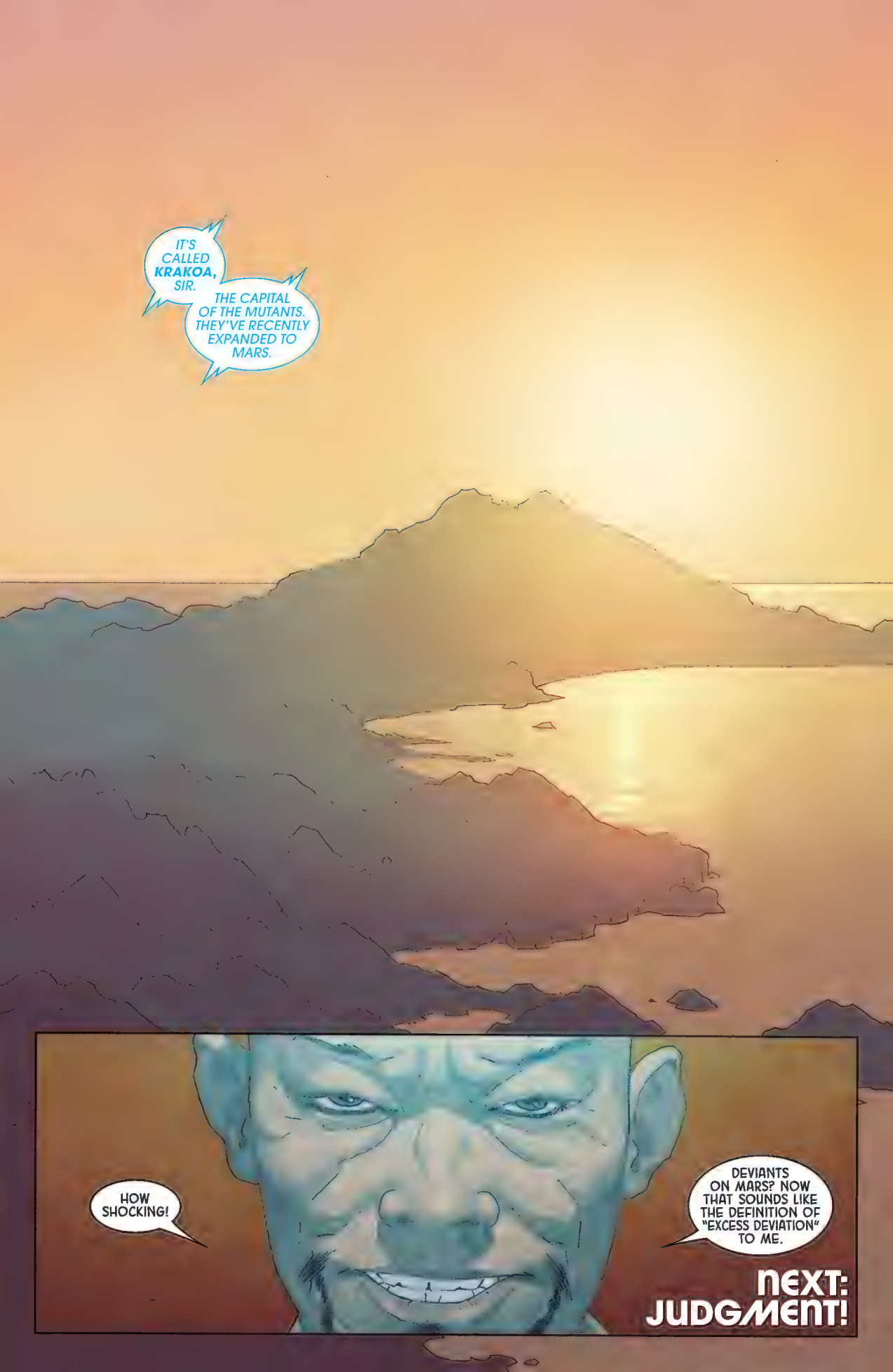
4) Who understands that in a time when our understanding of ourselves have been shaken time and time over--first by the Final Host, and now by Ajak's séance with the Progenitor--that we must secure stability, no matter what the cost?

5) Once again: Who just saved the planet?

"All previous Prime Eternals have been great people. Perhaps in our diminished times, we need a leader who is the exact opposite of that. Druig does fit the bill. All know that none is smaller than he."

--Oceanus,
sole remaining patriarch

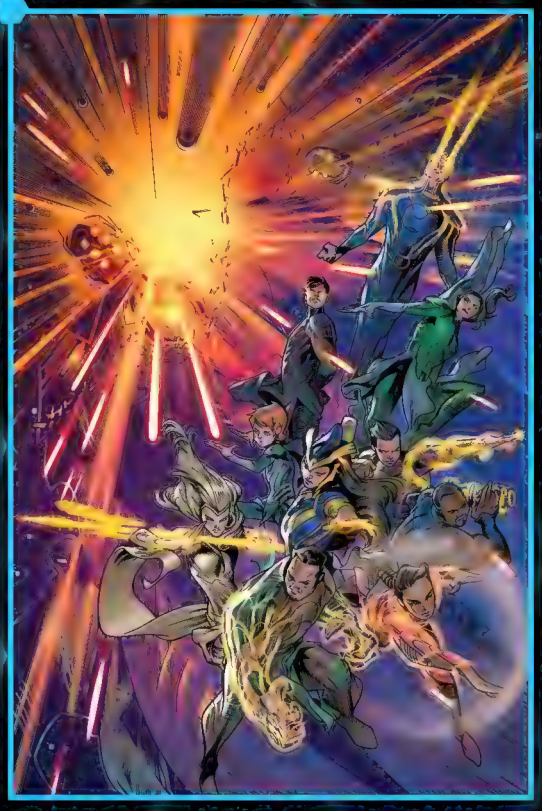

OLYMPIA.
DRUIG LIKES THE THRONE. HE KNOWS IF HE IS TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A CARETAKER, HE NEEDS TO GIVE HIS PEOPLE A PURPOSE.
WE NEED SOMETHING TO BRING THEM TOGETHER...
MACHINE...WITH THE NEW DEVIANT DATABASE, CAN YOU LOCATE WHAT BEINGS THE DEVIANTS HAVE CATALYZED. WHERE CAN WE FIND DEVIANT DNA?
CERTAINLY, LORD DRUIG, THE MAGNIFICENT.
I'M SORRY. HE IS IN CHARGE, AND HE INSISTED. HE IS SUCH A PLONKER.
AREAS WITH DEVIANT-DERIVED DNA HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED, SIR.
POINT TAKEN. THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. BUT INCREASE THE STRINGENCY--LET ME SEE WHERE WE HAVE... SAY... GENES WHICH WE WOULD COUNT AS DEVIANT.
AND FACTOR IN INTELLIGENCE. SENTIENCE. I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THE RESULT OF THE UNFORTUNATE OCCASION WHEN A DEVIANT AND A MOLLUSK FELL IN LOVE...
SHOW ME THE POPULATION PEAKS...
NOW, THAT'S MORE INTERESTING.
THAT BIG ONE IS LEMURIA AND...
ZOOM IN. WHAT'S THAT ISLAND?
A LOT OF DEVIANTS THERE.


IT'S CALLED **KRAKOA,** SIR.
THE CAPITAL OF THE MUTANTS. THEY'VE RECENTLY EXPANDED TO MARS.
HOW SHOCKING!
DEVIANTS ON MARS? NOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE DEFINITION OF "EXCESS DEVIATION" TO ME.
NEXT: JUDGMENT!

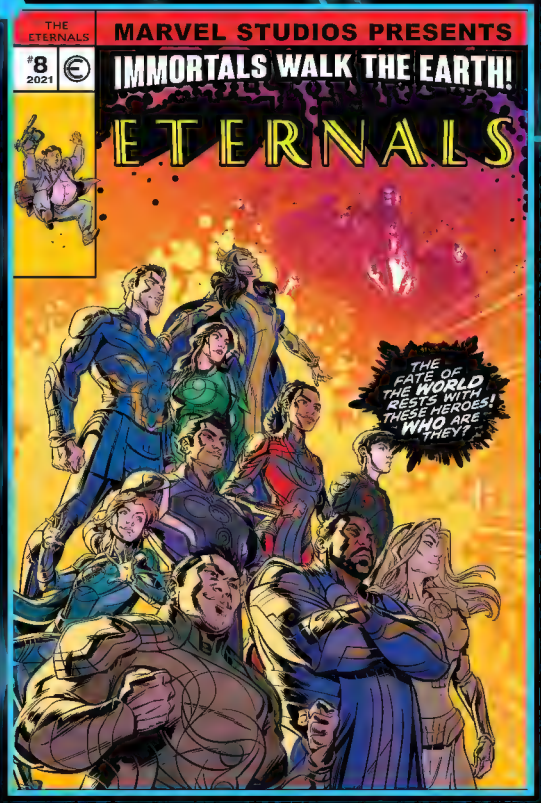
#7 DESIGN VARIANT BY **ESAD RIBIĆ**

#7 VARIANT BY **PEACH MOMOKO**

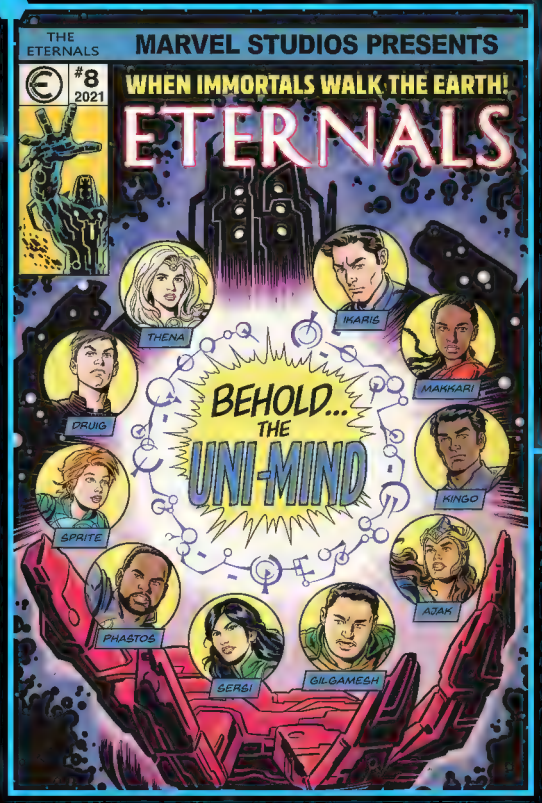
#7 MCU VARIANT BY **CLAYTON HENRY & MARCELO MAIOLO**



#7 MCU VARIANT BY **ALEXANDER LOZANO, WADE VON GRAWBADGER & JESUS ABURTOV**



#8 MCU VARIANT BY **LEONEL CASTELLANI**



#8 MCU VARIANT BY **CHRIS WAHL**

#10 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH VARIANT BY **RIAN GONZALES**

#10 FORESHADOW VARIANT BY **SALVADOR LARROCA** & **EDGAR DELGADO**

#11 FORESHADOW VARIANT BY **SALVADOR LARROCA** & **EDGAR DELGADO**

#11 VARIANT BY **DAVID MACK**

#12 VARIANT BY **ARTHUR ADAMS** & **FEDERICO BLEE**

#12 FORESHADOW VARIANT BY **SALVADOR LARROCA** & **EDGAR DELGADO**

#10 CARNAGE FOREVER VARIANT BY **KYLE HOTZ & DAN BROWN**

#11 SPIDER-MAN VARIANT BY **EMA LUPACCHINO & RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

#12 SKRULL VARIANT BY **NAO FUJI**

#7 HEADSHOT VARIANT BY **TODD NAUCK & RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

#8 HEADSHOT VARIANT BY **TODD NAUCK & RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

#9 HEADSHOT VARIANT BY **TODD NAUCK & RACHELLE ROSENBERG**

#7 HEADSHOT VARIANT BY **JIM CHEUNG**

"The diverse, distinctive cast of characters and conflicting motivations make for the kind of fleshed-out story longtime fans and new readers will drool over." – Black Nerd Problems

THE ETERNALS HAVE LEARNED THE TRUTH OF THEIR EXISTENCE.

THEIR SOCIETY IS IN SHAMBLES. Who can lead them? Who is the visionary that can raise them up from the ashes? Hail Thanos...the Mad Titan... Prime Eternal?! After warring with the Deviants for a million years, our disheartened Eternals have had enough. They want to end the endless war, to live in peace side by side. Unfortunately, the Deviants have other ideas. And so the Eternals undertake a pilgrimage to Avengers Mountain, the massive structure that was once one of their Celestial gods. But the Avengers are done with the Eternals' secrets, and they demand explanations! And when Ajak makes contact with her Celestial god, will the answers she receives help guide the Eternals or send them further into disarray?

COLLECTING ***ETERNALS (2021) #7-12*** – BY KIERON GILLEN, ESAD RIBIĆ, GUIU VILANOVA AND MATTHEW WILSON.

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